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THE CHRISTOLOGY OF PAUL

By

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ANALYSIS.

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THE CHRISTOLOGY OF PAUL.

I. ITS RELATION TO MONOTHEISM.

1. Paul's Heritage as a Jew.

Paul came from a race whose fundamental contribution to the religious thought of the world is that of monotheism. It would be natural to expect to find this a prominent part of his thought.

2. A consideration of the passages which deal with this.

1Cor.8:6; 1Cor.3:23; 1Cor.11:3; 1Cor.15:23-28; Eph.4:6; 1Tim.2:5; Romans 9:5. In all of these passages with the exception of the last, there is unquestionably a clear monotheism. This last may also be translated so as to harmonize with the others. We see that after, as well as before his conversion, Paul was a devout believer in the One true God.

II. ITS RELATION TO ANGEOLOGY.

1. Paul's inherited belief in Intermediary Beings.

Paul also inherited a firm belief in a vast world of intermediary beings. The canonical books of the O.T., but especially the Apocrypha, testify to the hold which this had upon the minds of the Jews in the pre-Christian era. This was Paul's birthright.

2. Intermediary Beings in Paulinism.

A consideration of many passages in the letters of Paul goes to show that Paul naturally shared the belief of his age along this line and that he lived in a great spirit world, filled with intermediary beings of different ranks.



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III. AN EXAMINATION OF THE PASSAGES WHICH DEAL WITH THE BEING OF CHRIST.

1. The Preexistence of Christ.

a). Did Paul teach this? There have been some who have doubted whether Paul ever taught this, but their contention seems to be without foundation.

b). Passages which Teach the Preexistence of Christ.

Col.1:15-17; Phil.2:5^f; 1Cor.8:6; 1Cor.10:4; 2Cor.8:9; Rom.8:3, and Gal.4:4. These six passages give the gist of the teaching of the Apostle in regard to the preexistence of Christ. Little is said as to the mode of the being of Christ in this pre-earthly life. But his work as the active agent in the creation of the world is emphasized. We see that Paul thought of Christ as having existed from the beginning of time, -a powerful personality.

2. The Incarnation.

a). Introductory. The difficulties in connection with the coming of the preexistent Christ into the world centre around two main questions:-1). How did Christ come into the world. 2). What was the nature of his earthly existence.

b). How did Christ come into the world? Paul does not emphasize the virgin birth of Jesus. It may reasonably be maintained that he did not know of it.

c). The Nature of Christ during his Earthly Existence. The discussion centres around two heads:-1). The perfect Deity of Christ, and 2). The perfect Humanity of Christ. 1) We have already discussed the first subject under Part I, Sect. 2.

2). The perfect Humanity of Christ.

a). Did Paul ascribe perfect humanity to Christ? The main arguments in favor of this considered.



b). The Arguments against Paul's ascribing Perfect Humanity to Christ.

These arguments are based chiefly on the two classic passages,-Romans 8:3, and Phil.2:7-8. These verses involve the relation of Christ to the Flesh.

1). The Flesh. Did Paul simply identify Flesh and Sin, or did he regard Sin as an alien force invading the "flesh"? There seem to be statements which would support both of these views. We must content ourselves with saying that in the thought of Paul the two are so closely allied as to be for all practical purposes, inseparable,-the one involved in the other.

2). The sinfulness of the Flesh and the sinlessness of Christ form the great Christological problem for Paul. In this connection, the circumcision in Romans 8:3,-'in the likeness of sinful flesh', is interesting. This phrase seems to be an attempt of the Apostle to reconcile the two facts,-that Christ was sinless and that the "flesh" was sinful. If he succeeds, it is at the cost of a consistent picture of Christ as truly man.

3). The same line of thought is also found in Phil.2:7-8. Here we find the same phrase, 'in the likeness of man'. The Apostle was trying to unite in one picture the two figures,-that of the heavenly Messiah of Jewish tradition and that of the earthly Jesus of the early Christians. It is a difficult task. Perhaps, yes doubtless, the task was made easier for Paul, because of the loose way prevalent in his age, of thinking about personality, as well as the general metaphysics of the age in which he lived.

4). Conclusion. Ordinarily Paul gives Christ the common generic term of man. This is when he is not concerned with the

question of the person of Christ, and has therefore little significance for the present discussion. It seems that when this is a question as in these passages just considered, that Paul rather yields the entire participation of Christ in our earthly life. He was too lofty a person to be defiled with a body of sinful flesh. The general tenor of the statements of Paul along this line are to the effect that Christ was much more than man.

3. The Risen Christ.

After having successfully accomplished his earthly mission, Christ ascended back to heaven with an added degree of power, and glory for the work done here. There he is to reign until his second coming at which time he will surrender up the power to the Father, who is to be all and in all.

IV. SUMMARY AND RESULTS.

The general facts of the Christology of Paul are clear, and not disputed to any extent. Christ was a divine being, present at the creation of the world, sent into the world to redeem men from sin, ascending to heaven after the completion of his task to reign in power with God until he should come again into the world and deliver the kingdom back to God the Father.

The difficulties are found in the implications of some of these general facts.

That which is of value to us is to consider the lofty place in which the Apostle puts his Lord. To see how he takes the ideas prevalent in his day and with them pictures the grace and beauty and power of the life of Christ should be our guiding thought in our study of Paul's thought about Christ. He exhausts the realm of intermediary beings, and almost ventures into the presence of

God Himself, to find a suitable place for the Christ of the
Damascus road experience. Paul's Christology is a loving and
enthusiastic attempt to portray the spiritual supremacy of Christ,
as he had experienced it.

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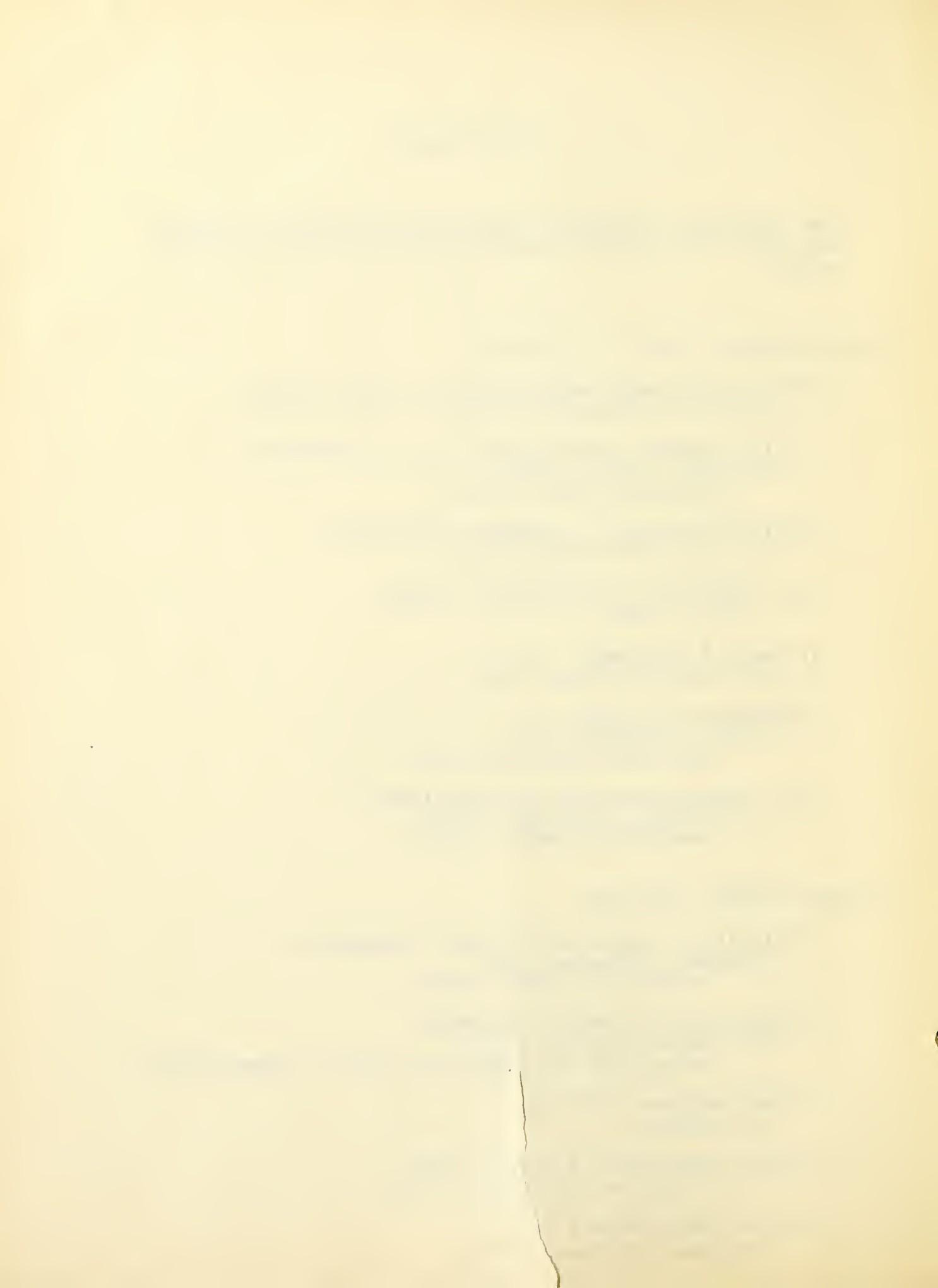
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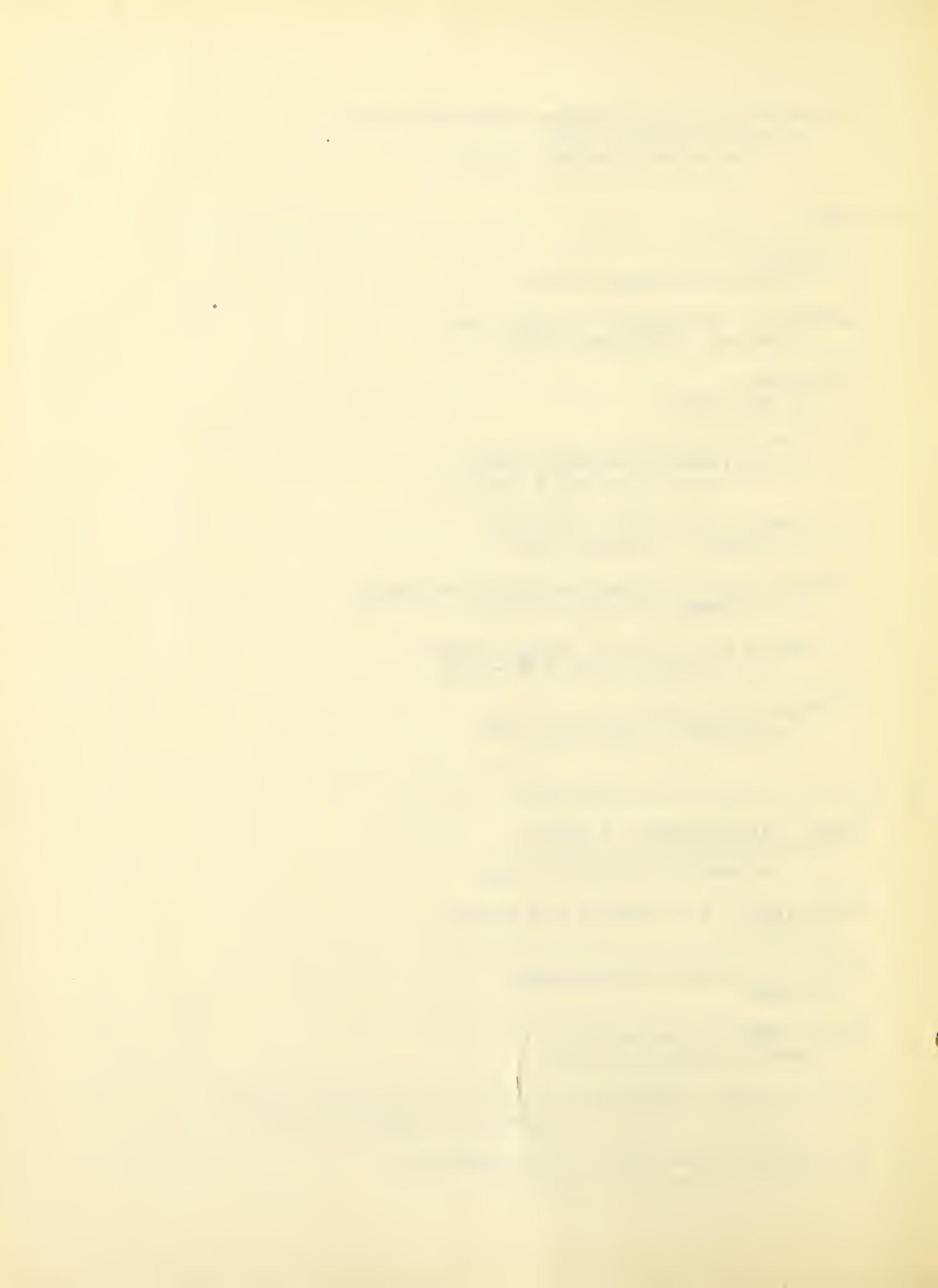
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DISSERTATION.

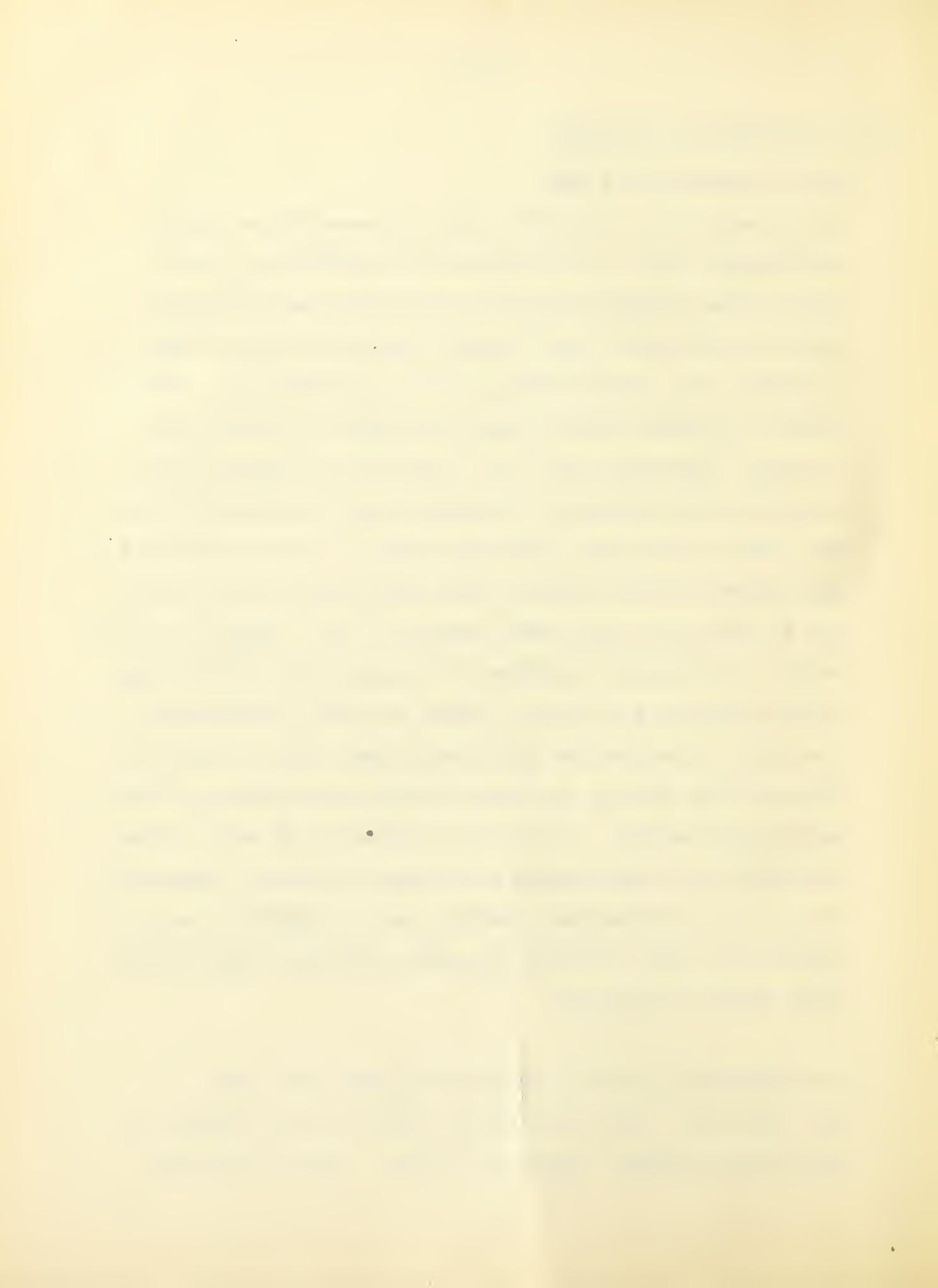
I. ITS RELATION TO MONOTHEISM.

1. Paul's Heritage as a Jew.

Paul, being a Jew, inherited from his ancestors a strict monotheistic view. The distinctive contribution of his race to the religious thought of the world was the words which were upon the lips of every devout Jew daily,—"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, is ONE LORD,"(Deut.6:4). The history of Israel through many long years of defeats and reverses, resolves itself into a struggle to maintain the sanctity of the Temple at Jerusalem, and the worship of the one, true God for whom the Temple stood. The beginnings of monotheism among the Hebrew people are shrouded in mystery. But by the time of the great prophets, Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, the doctrine is announced in clear and certain tones. In the prophesies of Second Isaiah, we find a monotheistic teaching of the clearest and purest kind, which is all the more striking when we contrast it with the polytheism of the surrounding peoples. It would be natural to expect, in the theology of so strict a Jew as was Saul of Tarsus, stern fidelity to this fundamental doctrine, and to expect to see it carried over with the least possible alteration into the new faith which he espoused.

2. A Consideration of the Passages which deal with This.

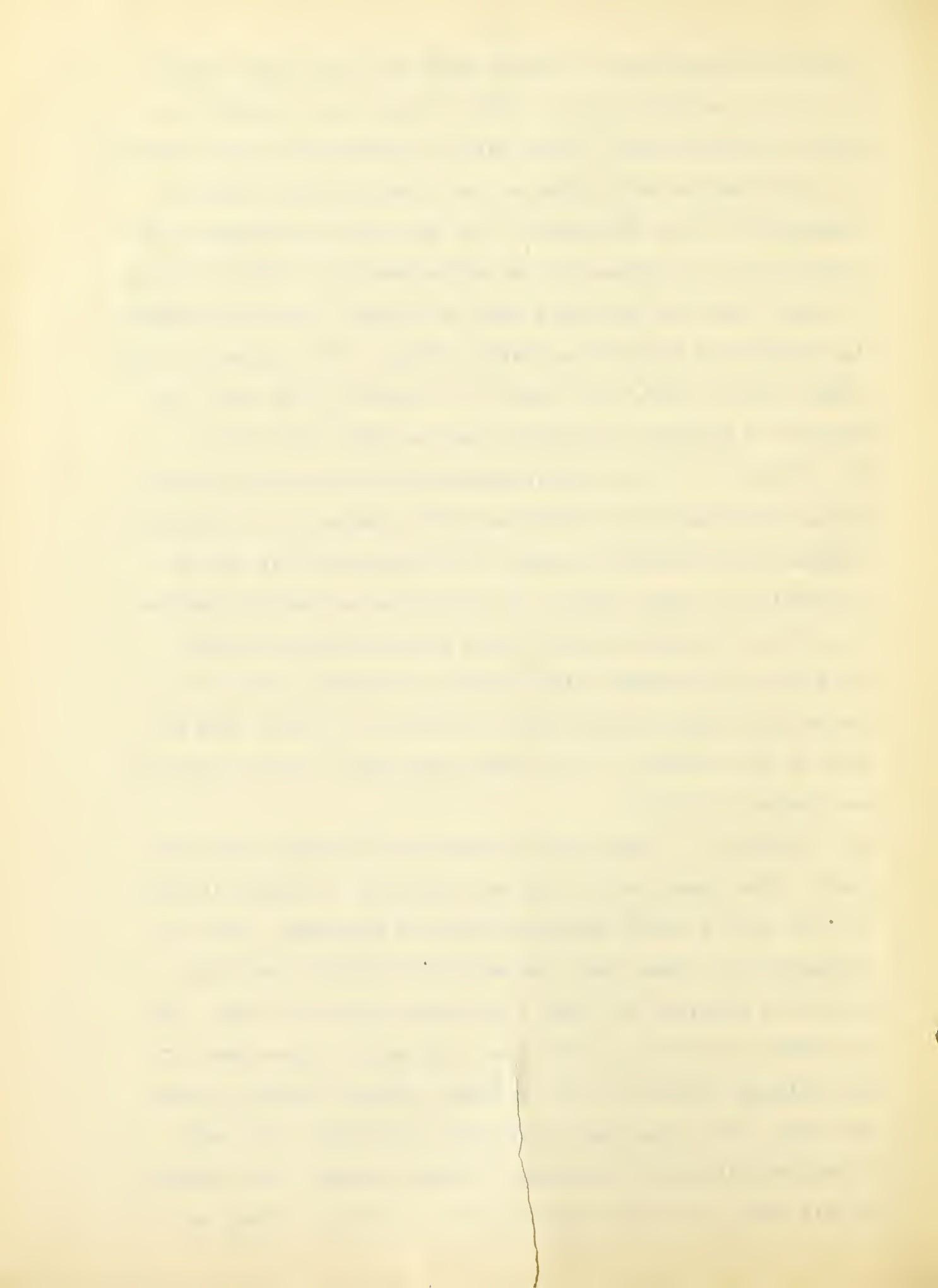
a). 1Cor.8:6. "For to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto Him". Paul is here dis-



cussing the propriety of eating meat that had been offered to idols. And although he finally decides the question on purely moral grounds, yet he makes a parenthesis here, (vs.4-7), to show that the whole discussion is meaningless from the standpoint of the Christian. For "an idol is nothing in the world", (v.4), and therefore to offer meat to a piece of clay or stone does not taint the meat in any way. And the Christian recognizes the idol as being nothing. For "there is none other God but One", (v.4), and "to us there is One God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto Him", (v.6).

b). 1Cor.3:23. In a protest against division in the Church, and an exhortation for unity among the brethren, the Apostle reminds the people at Corinth of the Unity that is at the foundation of their faith. He introduces a favorite rabbinical form of reasoning,-the chain argument,-and seeks to show how all different lines finally converge in God. He traces all things through the Christian, to Christ, and at last to God Himself. "All things are yours,-ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's".

c). 1Cor.11:3. "The head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God". We have here a truly rabbinical line of argument. Paul is endeavoring to show that a woman should always cover her head when praying, but that a man never should do this. For the head of the woman is the man, and as the shorn head of the natural man ought to be covered, a woman ought to cover her head. But "the head of the man is Christ", so a man dishonors his head if he cover it when praying; for Christ is his head, and Christ should not be covered. Surely a

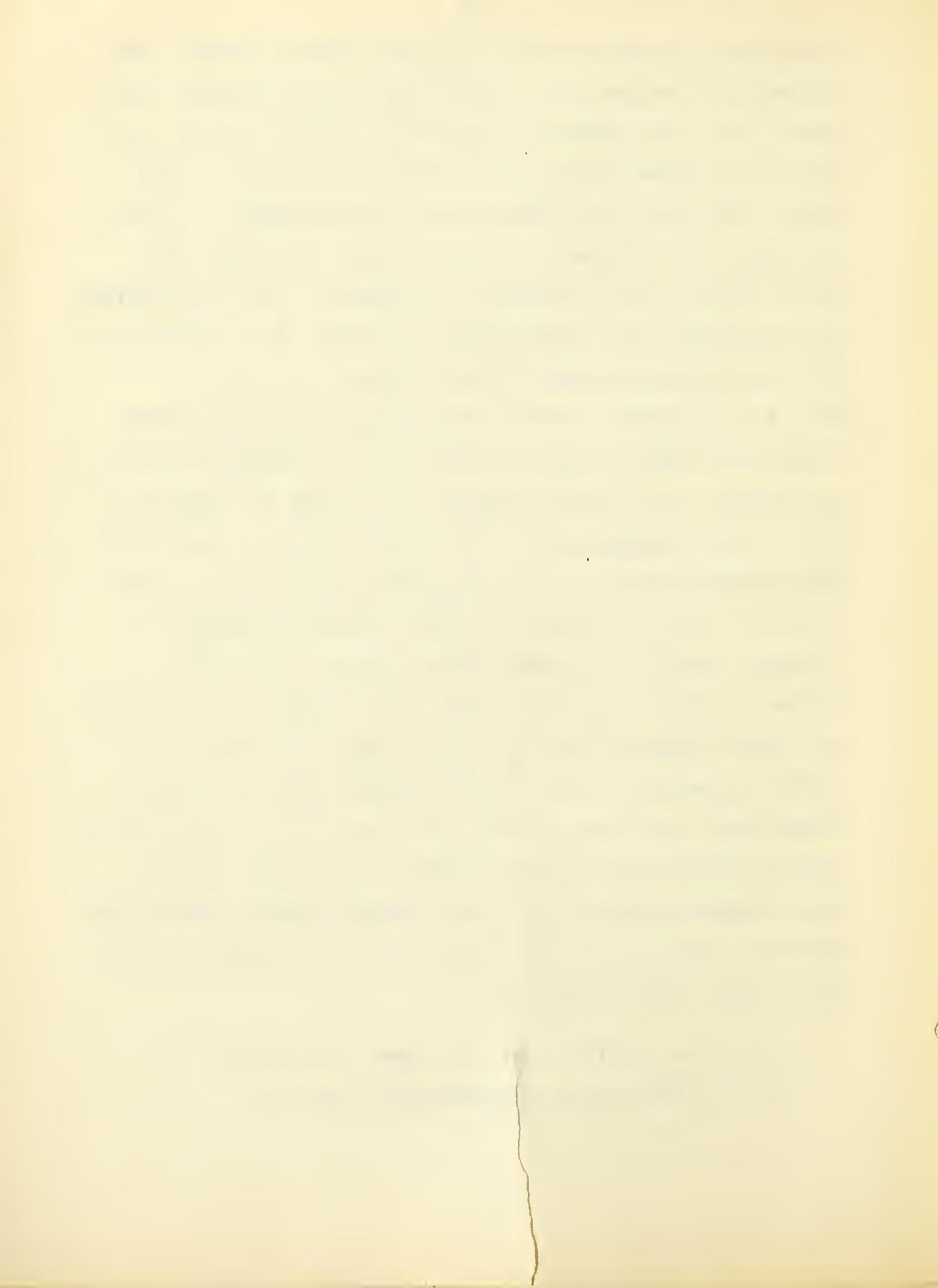


hard piece of reasoning for the modern mind to follow. But the point to notice here is that, quite gratuitously, Paul puts in one more statement,-"the head of Christ is God." We have here another triple chain argument, like that of 1Cor. 3:23. The head of the woman is the man,-the head of the man is Christ,-and the head of Christ is God. This last step adds nothing to the argument. It appears to be an unconscious and therefore doubly significant expression of his belief in the One God as the source of all things.

d). 1Cor.15:23-28. In his eschatology, Paul looks forward to the time when God shall be all in all. "Christ's rule is not eternal. The peculiar dogma of the deity of Christ in all of its consequences, Paul does not yet know. Victorious and splendid rises the pure monotheism,-that God may be All in All." Such is Bousset's comment upon this passage.(1). J.Weiss' comment upon these verses is also illuminating. "Here it becomes absolutely clear, that in spite of ascribing to Christ a divine place, in spite of all the worship of Christ, nevertheless Paul finally remains upon the Jewish stand point, according to which the 'Rule of the Messias' is only a limited epoch in the history of the world, and not the everlasting state.(2). This passage clearly portrays the eventual subjection of all things and of all persons, including Christ, unto the One God.

(1). Die Schriften des I.T.-page 126. II Band.

(2). J.Weiss,-Das Urchristentum, page 363.



e). 1Th.4:6. Here again the Apostle's desire for unity among the brethren leads him to trace all things back to God. He is 'the one God and Father of all'. It is interesting to note in this connection that in verse 5 Christ is placed in a rank of his own, and different from that given to God, -there is also 'One Lord'.

f). 1Tim.2:5. In this passage Christ is placed under God, in that he is represented as the Mediator between man and God. "There is one God".

g). Romans 9:5. "Whose are the Fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ, who is over all, God blessed forever." From a purely grammatical stand point, there are two interpretations of this verse possible. And both are equally defensible.

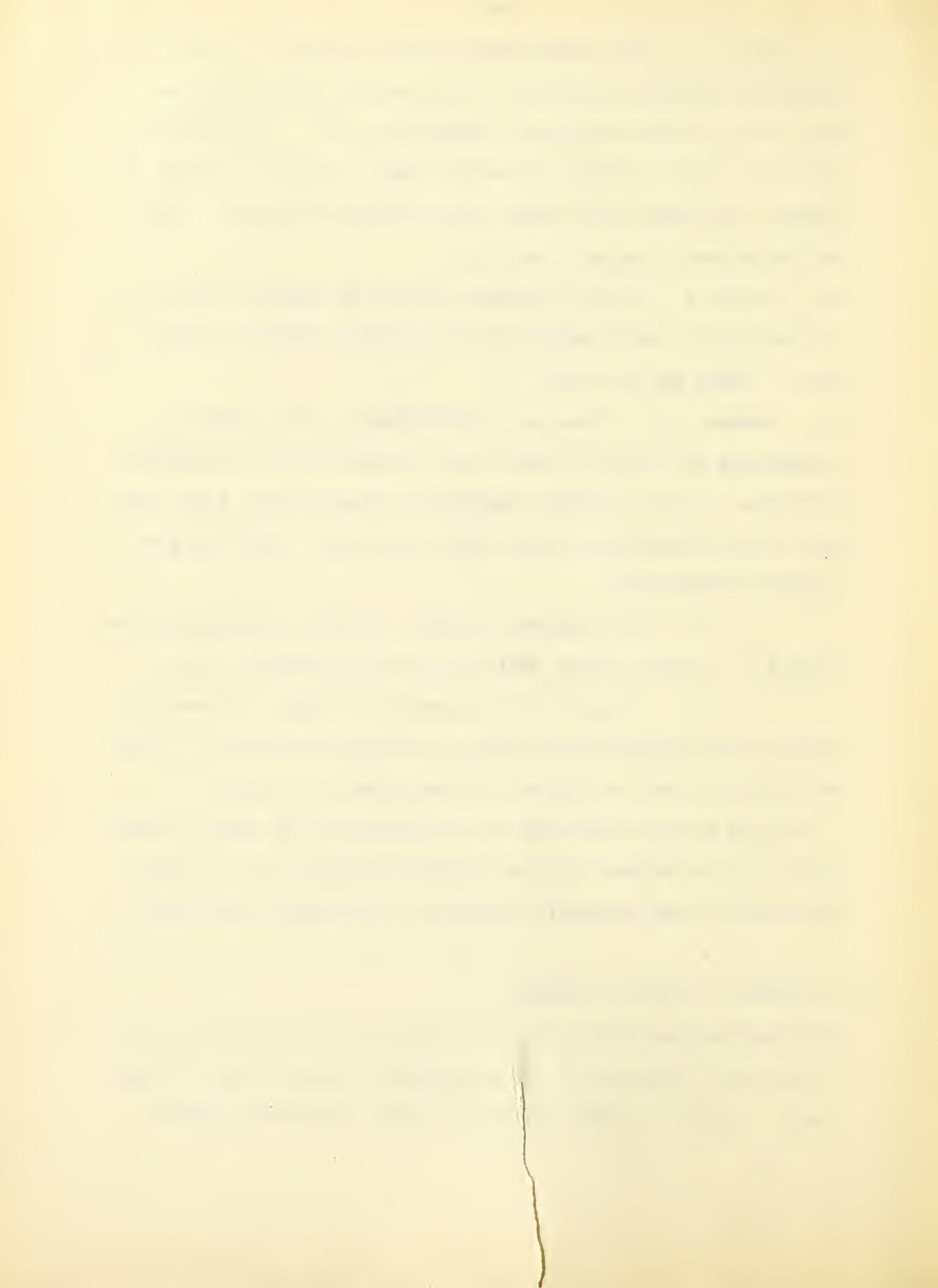
1). "God blessed forever" may be in apposition to Christ. In such a case Christ is called directly, "God".

2). It may be an exclamatory phrase, expressing praise and thanksgiving to God. If this be correct, it has no bearing upon the subject of the person of Christ.

As far as the structure of the verse is concerned, there is no choice between the two interpretations, nor is there anything in the immediate context to determine the matter.

3. A Summary of these Passages.

We have examined seven verses, practically all that can be found in the writings of Paul, dealing directly with the subject. In six of these verses we find a strict adherence



to the monotheistic view which we may suppose Paul had inherited. The other verse may also be interpreted so as to harmonize with them, and this seems to be the reasonable meaning to give to it under the circumstances. It would seem then that Paul never called Jesus directly by the name of God, but that on the contrary he continually distinguished him from God, and usually placed him in a certain subjection to God. There are, it is true, some passages where it seems that Christ is placed at the head of all things. In the glowing Christological excusus of Col.1:15-17, for example, the figure of Christ seems to overshadow even that of God Himself. But we need to remember that the letter to the Colossians was written with polemic intent, to combat a growing belief in the power of intermediate beings, and to portray the superiority of Christ to them all. There is no thought of a comparison here between God and Christ. The passage is solely concerned with the position of Christ in comparison to that of the host of angels and demonic powers.

We do well to keep in mind, of course, in all our discussion of the theology of Paul, that he does not seem to have been greatly concerned with metaphysical distinctions. His was a practical, working theology, and we must be careful not to read into his words subtle meanings which have no place there. We must leave room for the human equation in the words of the Apostle. Still, in the passages just considered, the general thought seems to be that there is one God and only one, and that He is the source of all life and power.

II. ITS RELATION TO ANGEOLOGY.

1. Paul's Inherited Belief in Intermediary Beings.

Whether or not we call it a decline of the early rigid monotheism of the Hebrew people, it is a fact that in later years there grew up a belief in numerous intermediary beings. There were evil spirits which were charged with all the wrongs, national and individual, which the Jew found hard to understand. But there were also good spirits as well, and their office was to help man. There seems to have been no attempt to classify these beings of the spirit world. Their outlines are vague and shadowy. The Books of Daniel, Ecclesiastes of Solomon, and the Book of Jubilees are especially full of references to these intermediary beings. For example, in the Book of Jubilees, written probably between 135 and 105, Before Christ, we find the most advanced stage of angelology. "There we find beside the two supreme classes, a large order of inferior beings, who preside over natural phenomena, seventy patron angels, and angels who were guardians of individuals. And over against these there was a well organized demonic kingdom."(1). Then again, there were the more abstract and indefinable types, bearing such names as "The Wisdom of God", -"The Splendor of God", -"The Name of God", -etc.(2). Scarcely more than the name remains to us of these beings.

2. Intermediary Beings in Paulinism.

We are strangers to Paul's mode of thought until we place cur-

(1). Book of Jubilees-Charles-Intrc. Section 16.

(2). Die Religion des Judentums im N.T. Zeitalter,-
Bousset,-page 394.

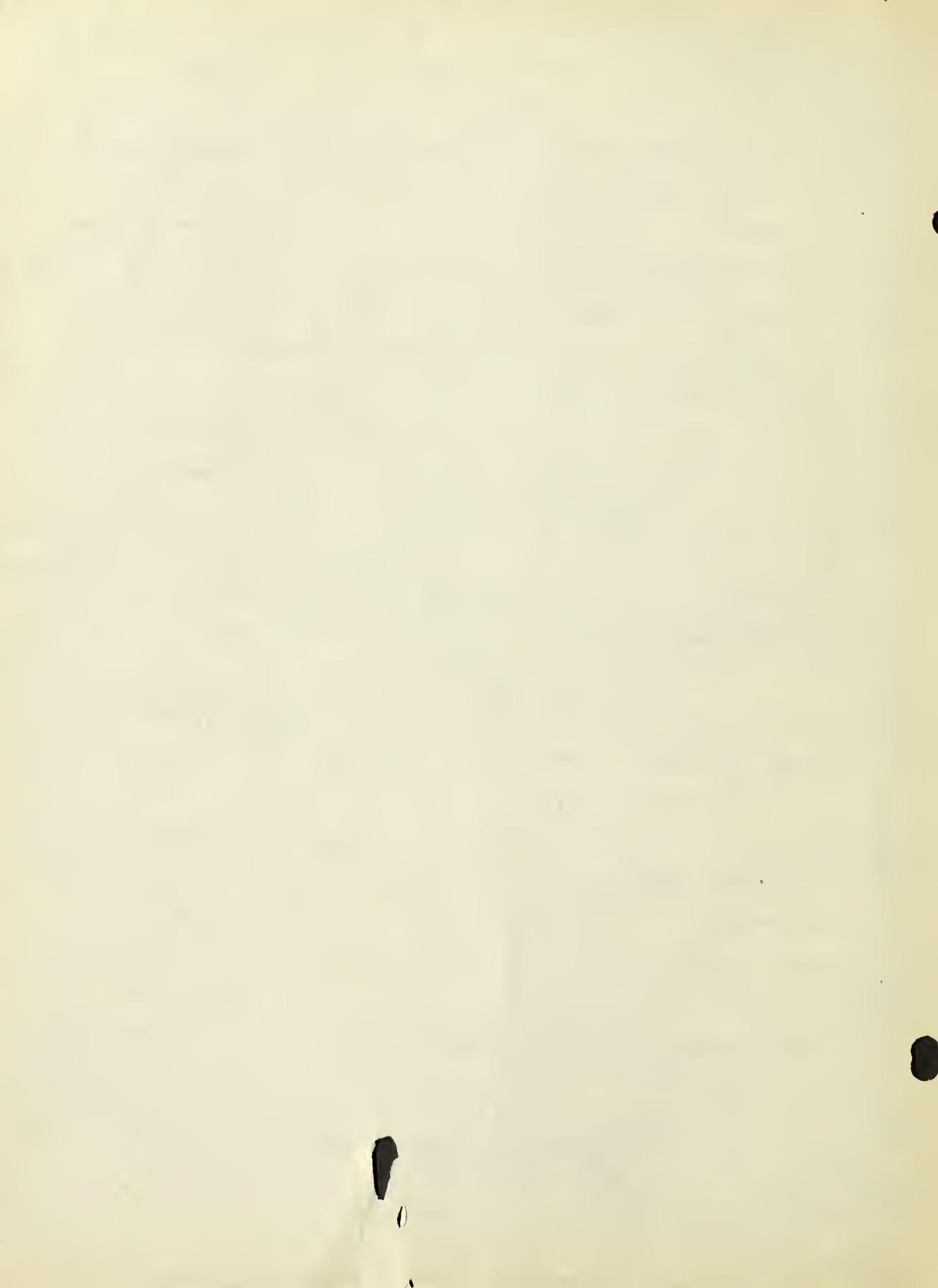
selves in this spirit world. He was not of the Sadducees, who denied the existence of the angels, (Acts 23:8). He was a Pharisee, and he carried over into his new faith all his old belief concerning angels and demons. His was no hard and fast, unyielding world of things seen and heard with the physical senses. His gaze was on the things that are unseen, (2Cor.4:18). His ear was so attuned to spiritual harmonies that he could even hear the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain for the redemption of the world from sin, (Rom. 8:22). He was once caught up into the third heaven, entirely away from the gross things of earth, where he heard things unlawful for a man to utter, (2Cor.12:2). He waited with an anxious heart for the time when the Lord should descend from heaven with a shout and those who were alive would be caught up to meet him in the air and be forever with him, (1Thess.4:16-17). It was a tense, a pregnant time. And into such a world it was no trouble for the Apostle to enter with a simple and unquestioning faith in good and evil spirits.

He admits, even while arguing for the supremacy of the one true God, that there are many so-called gods in heaven and on earth, (1Cor.8:5). The Christian life is a struggle with principalities and powers, with rulers of the darkness of this world, (Eph.6:12). With reasoning which sounds strange to our ears, he exhorts women to cover their heads in the Church, lest they tempt the angels, (1Cor.11:10). "The God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving", (2Cor.4:4). At the last judgment, the saints shall judge even the angels, (1Cor.6:3), an echo probably of a belief that was current in pre-Christian days. He tells us that

in Christ all things were created, and among them were thrones, principalities and powers, (Col.1:16). The Law was ordained through angels, (Gal.3:19). He is persuaded that neither angels, nor principalities, nor powers can separate the Christian from the love of God as it is revealed in Christ, (Rom.8:38). The Ephesians had formerly walked according to the powers of the air, (Eph.2:2). Christ was revealed in order that the wisdom of God might be made manifest to the principalities and powers, (Eph.3:10). Paul believed in a personal Satan, as numerous references show, - (Romans 16:20; 1Cor.5:5; 2Cor.2:11, and 11:14; 1Thess.2:18 and 3:5, etc.)

Here then is the world in which the thought of the Apostle moved and which colored all his words. It is impossible to classify these beings as to their relative rank and importance. "The attempt to determine in detail the rank which these different names indicate may only be done with great caution. But it does seem that *oi θεοις* and *oi κυριοτητες* are the highest classes," (1). Even this limited classification, however, seems to be without much foundation. The spirit world of Paul remains in all its immensity, vague and shadowy, and without definite outlines. That which we would emphasize here, however, is this, - the ease with which Paul could find a place for Christ in this spirit world, and that without being too exact as to the metaphysical considerations which naturally occur to the modern mind.

(1). Die paulinische Angelologie und Dämonologie, - Everling, - page 122.



III. AN EXAMINATION OF THE PASSAGES WHICH DEAL WITH THE BEING OF CHRIST.

1. The Preexistence of Christ.

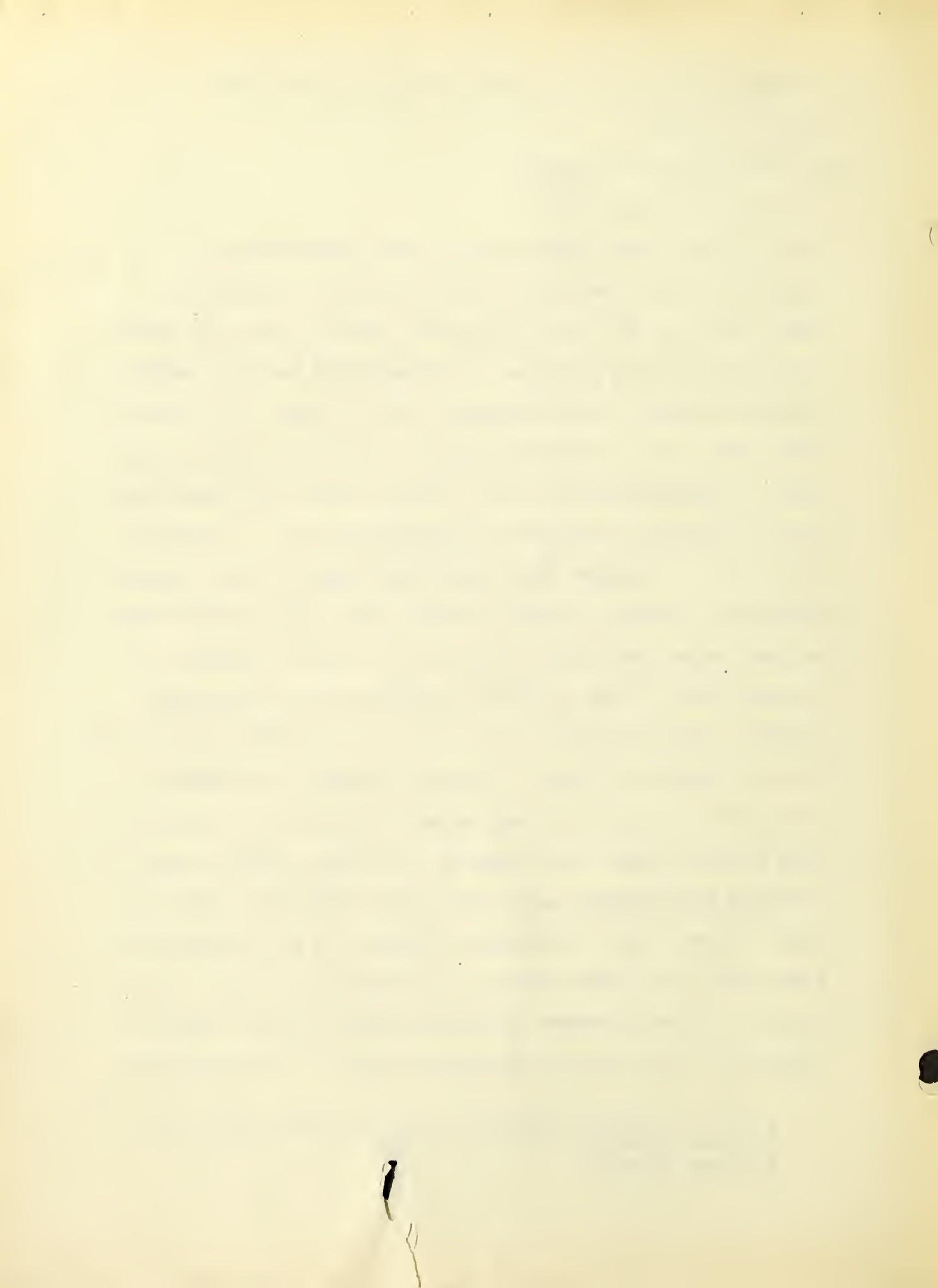
a). Did Paul teach this?

In discussing the Pauline idea of the preexistence of Christ, it may be well to note first of all, that there have been many who have maintained that Paul did not teach nor hold any such doctrine. An example of how they would interpret some of his statements may be given. In 2Cor.8:9, Paul says, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich." Drummond here does not believe that Paul refers here to any nonexistent state, because, he says, Christ and Jesus are both historical names, and Paul would not have been so inexact as to have used the two titles in speaking of a nonexistent person. He would rather have used the title, "Son of God".(1). In his comment on Phil.2:5 Drummond advances the same argument,(2). Once again commenting on 1Cor.8:6, he says that this does not mean that Jesus was the agent through whom the universe was created, and if we accept Drummond's view, we "are relieved from the bathes of saying we are through Him, after saying that the Universe is through Him."(3). But it is only by such strained interpretations as these, and by refusing to recognize as genuine a number of very explicit

1). International Handbook to I.T.-Drummond,-page 164.

2). Same,-page 371.

3). Same,-page 94.

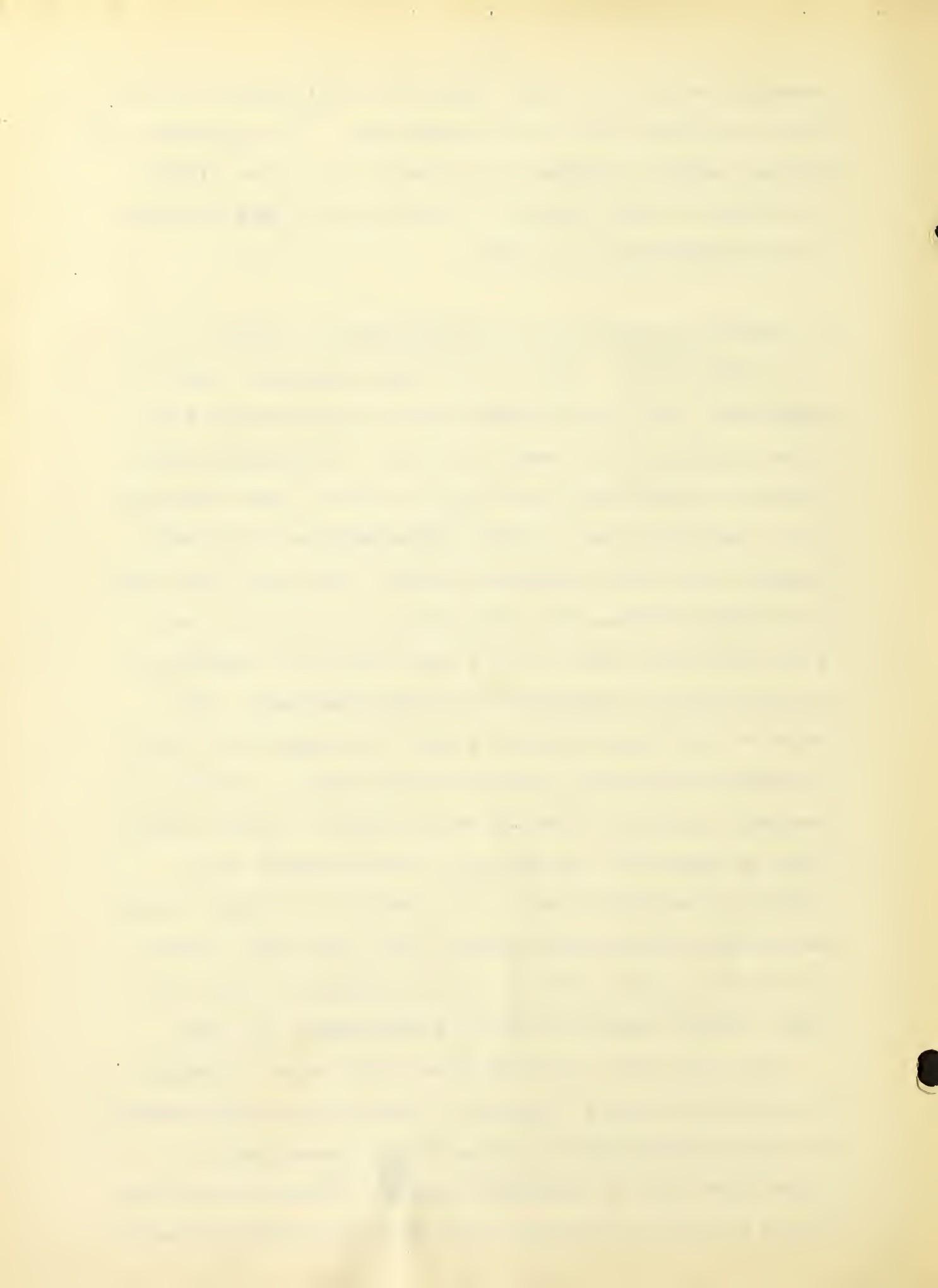


passages, such as Col.1:15, that the preexistence of Christ can be eliminated from Pauline theology. If we approach the subject without doctrinal bias, there is no more outstanding feature of the thought of Paul than this same doctrine of the preexistence of Christ.

b). Passages which Teach the Preexistence of Christ.

1). Col.1:15-17. This is the classic passage. What we have here is by common consent, Paul's application of the Logos-doctrine to the person of Jesus. Originating doubtless in the idealistic philosophy of Plato, first formulated by Posidonius, and in later times taken over by Jewish thinkers and fully expounded by Philo, the idea of the Logos was a favorite theme for the scholars of the age of Paul. A Jew like Philo found in it a very convenient explanation of the numerous theophanies of the Old Testament. The heart of the Logos-doctrine is that the Logos is the Soul, - the Life of the world, - present at the creation, and the instrument by which God wrought that miracle. In such statements as these:- "in him were all things created", v.16; "Christ is the first born of all creation", v.15; "all things have been created through him and unto him", v.16; "in him all things consist", v.17; - in such statements we find the Logos teaching applied directly to the person of Jesus.

2). Phil.2:5f. We enter here into a maze of speculation and difference of opinion. However we are only concerned with what the verses teach as to the preexistence of Christ, and that is reasonably clear. Deissmann says these verses are not to be treated as a rigid expression, but as an

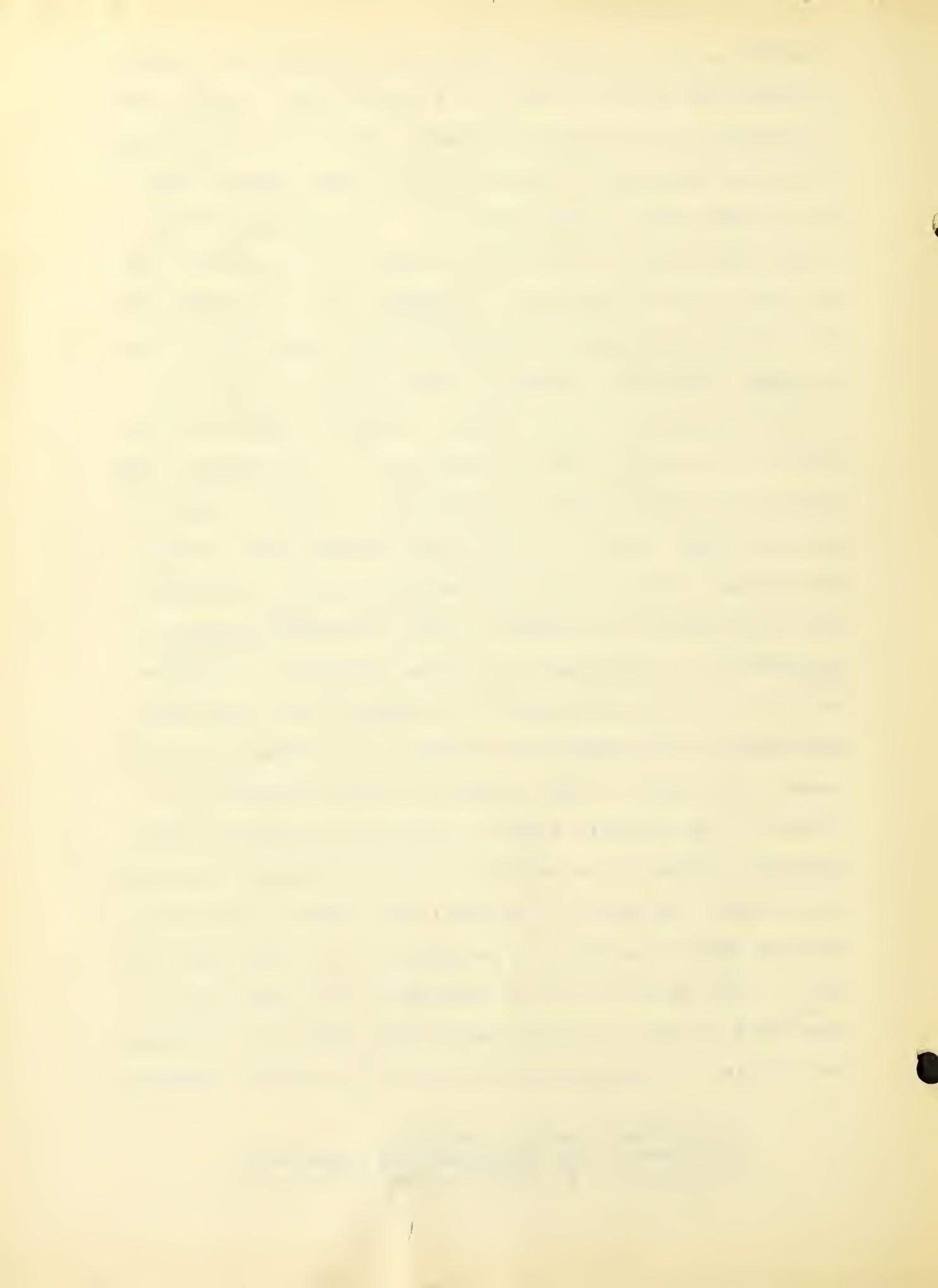


eloquent and half poetical adoration of Jesus, (1). J. Weiss advances his favorite theory of a second Adam, and sees here a reference to the story of Genesis. Christ in his heavenly state was the man from heaven, or the second Adam, of whom Paul speaks also in 1Cor.15:47, (2). Lucken believes that Paul refers here to the words of Isaiah, (Is.14:12-15), "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, Son of the Morning! How art thou cut down to the ground which didst weaken the nations. For thou hast said in thine heart, 'I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most high God' ", (3). It is highly probable that the Apostle may have had in mind these verses as he was describing the self abasement of Christ. Many interesting things are suggested by a comparison of the two passages. On the one hand, the pride and arrogance of Lucifer, and on the other, the humility and abasement of Christ. But whatever the reference, the theme of these verses is the renunciation of Christ. Some splendid state of being he left; - some highly desirable place in the councils of God he renounced in order to come into the world. "He was in the form of God but he did not think it a thing to be grasped to be made equal with God". This is as definite a statement as we shall find in the words of Paul as to the nature and rank of the preexistent Christ. It suggests that at that time he was a superior

1). Deissmann, -Paulus, -page 110.

2). J. Weiss, - Das Urchristentum, -page 373f.

3). Lucken, - Die Schriften des N.T., -page 379.

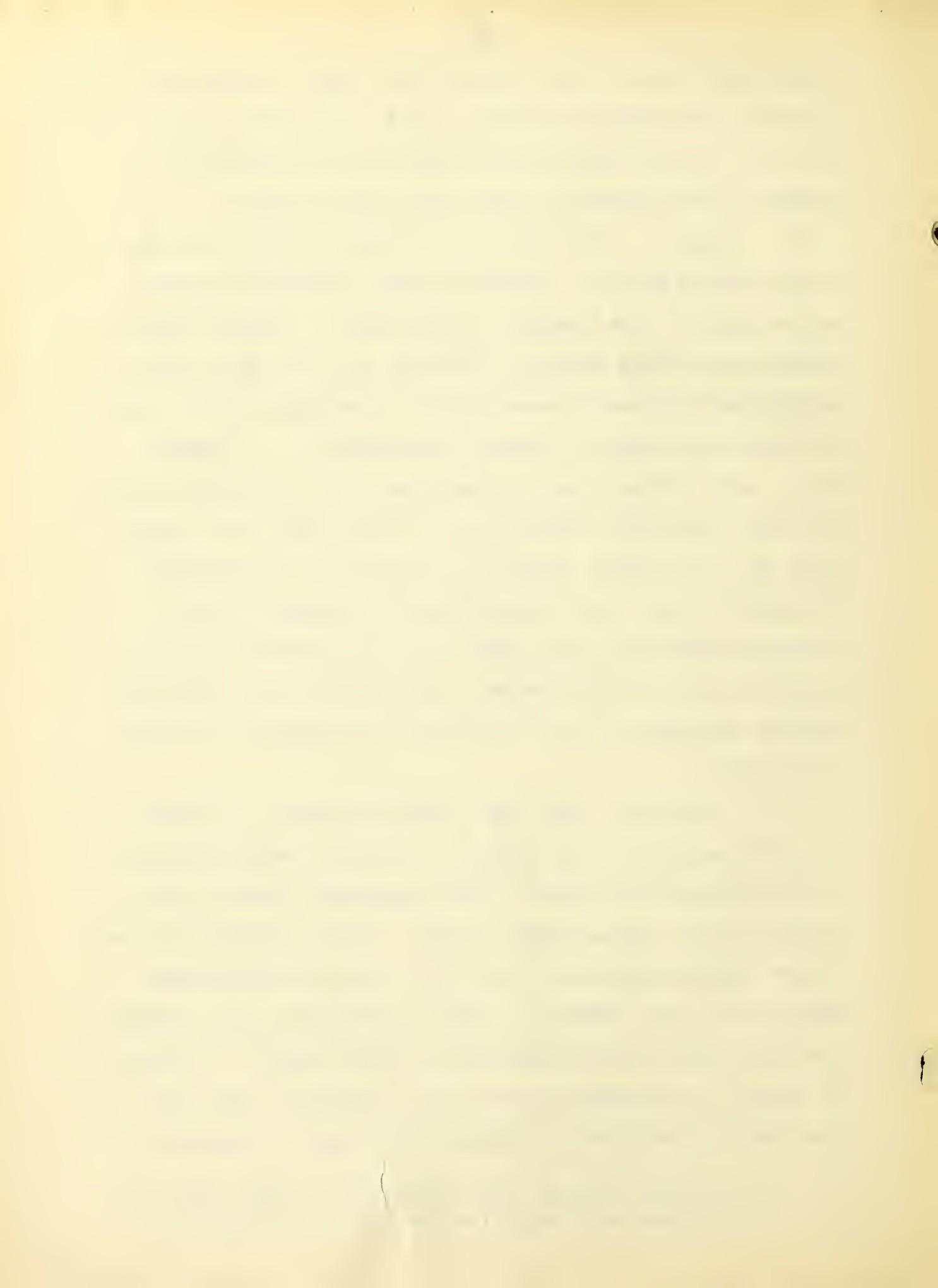


being, very close to God, and with the power to seriously endanger the supreme authority of God if he should choose to do so. This is about all we can say with certainty in regard to the teaching of this much debated verse.

3). 1Cor.8:6 "One Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things and we by him." Christ is here represented as the active agent in the creation of the world. Johannes Weiss makes much of this passage, declaring it to be Paul's most significant statement concerning the preexistent Christ, and one whose importance is usually overlooked,(1). Bousset, also, says, "We have here unquestionably the teaching concerning the preexistent Christ,"(2). It has indeed been argued that the 'All things' referred to are simply the spiritual blessings brought into the world by the coming of Christ. Standing alone the verse might be so interpreted, but taken together with the other words of the Apostle, it seems to be another expression of the doctrine so brilliantly set forth in Col.1:15.

4). 1Cor.10:4. "And that Rock was Christ". It would be quite natural for the Apostle to look for manifestations of the presence and power of the preexistent Christ in the history of the chosen people of God. Such a theophany he saw in the incident related in Ex.17:6. He spiritualized the story of how the Israelites drank from the rock, and asserted that this Rock was none other than Christ Himself. We have no means of determining how far this expression goes into the realm of metaphor, or whether Paul meant it literally.

1).J.Weiss,-Christ, the Beginnings of Drama,-page 110.
2).Bousset,-Die Schriften des T.T.-Vcl.2, page 95.



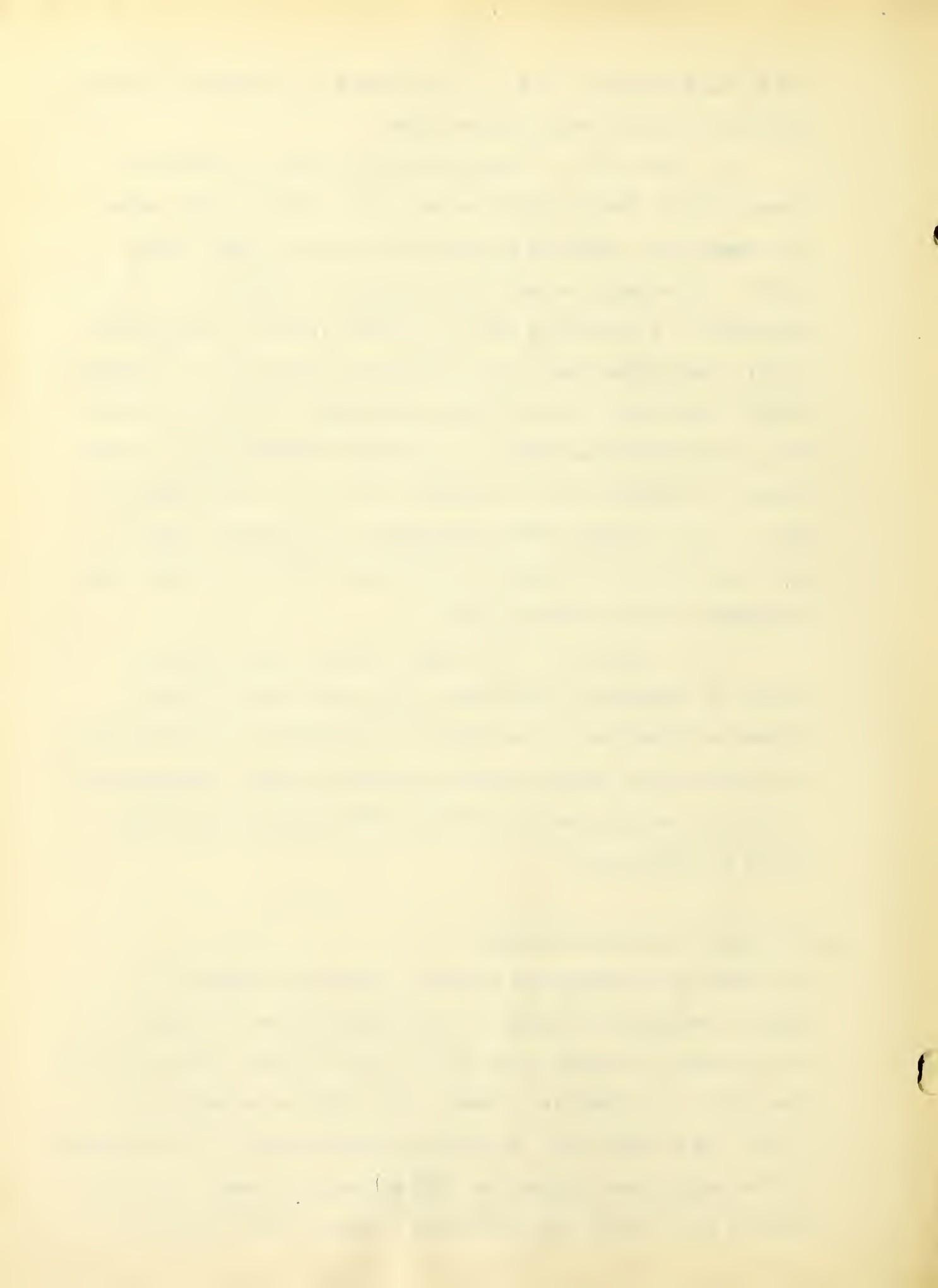
We do know however, that in some manner he thought of Christ as being present upon that occasion.

5). 2Cor.8:9. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich". Here again we have the thought of Phil.2:5. It is a contrast of the earthly life of Christ with his preexistent life. The latter was to the former as riches are to poverty. "Rich" was Christ in his former existence, and by his voluntary humiliation he made his disciples rich too, -not in the sense of earthly gain, of course, but rich in the favor of God. It is a figure which expresses the splendid state of the former life of Christ in comparison with the sorrow and suffering of his earthly life.

6). Romans 8:3, "God sent his son", and Gal.4:4, "When the fulness of time came, God sent forth his son", - these two passages may be taken as examples of a large number of verses whose general meaning is that Christ, existing previously in some capacity with God, was sent down into the world of sinful men.

c). A Summary of these Passages.

In these six passages we have the essential features of Paul's teaching in regard to the preexistence of Christ. As to his mode of being, Paul tells us but little, -Christ was in the form of God and in a state that might be described as rich. As to his work, He was the active agent in the creation of the world, and thereafter its sustaining power. He was present on at least one spiritual crisis in the history of

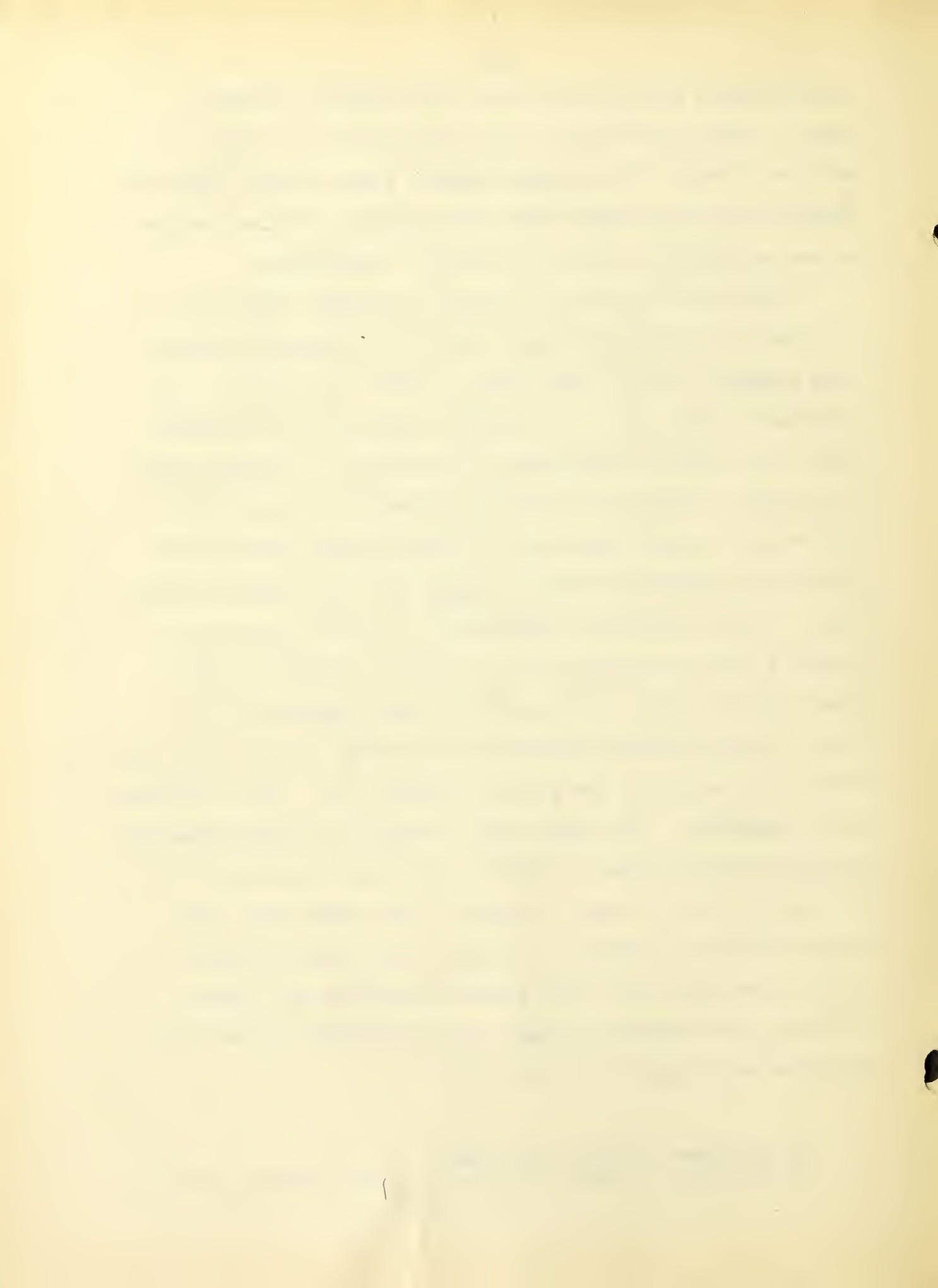


Israel,-being the Rock from which the thirsty pilgrims drank. Vague and shadowy as are the cutlines of this pre-existent Person, it is beyond dispute that Paul did think of Christ as having existed from the beginning of time, not as a mere abstraction, but as a powerful personality.

An interesting question, although one which leads into the realm of mere speculation, arises in a consideration of this subject; - How did Paul come to think of Christ as pre-existent? What led him to identify Christ with the world-soul, the Logos of Greek-Hebrew speculation? Deissman gives his opinion as follows; - "Christ's preexistence which Paul firmly held, comes simply out of the conception which Paul had of the spiritual Christ; he must have been from all eternity. It is a deduction therefore out of his certainty of Christ's spiritual nature,"(1). Forsythe expresses a similar opinion; - "Saint Paul's belief in the preexistence of Christ is an inevitable rebound of spiritual logic, under his faith's obsession by the Christ in glory,"(2). These opinions seem reasonable. Paul was trying to express the overpowering spiritual significance of Christ, and it was too great to be confined to any one age. A being of such power must have existed from all eternity. And once that step was taken, it was inevitable that Paul should seize upon the Logos-doctrine,-the dominating idea in the speculative thought of that age,-and identify Christ with it.

1). Deissmann, -Paulus, -page 110.

2). Forsythe, -Person and Place of Jesus Christ, -p. 268.



2. The Incarnation.

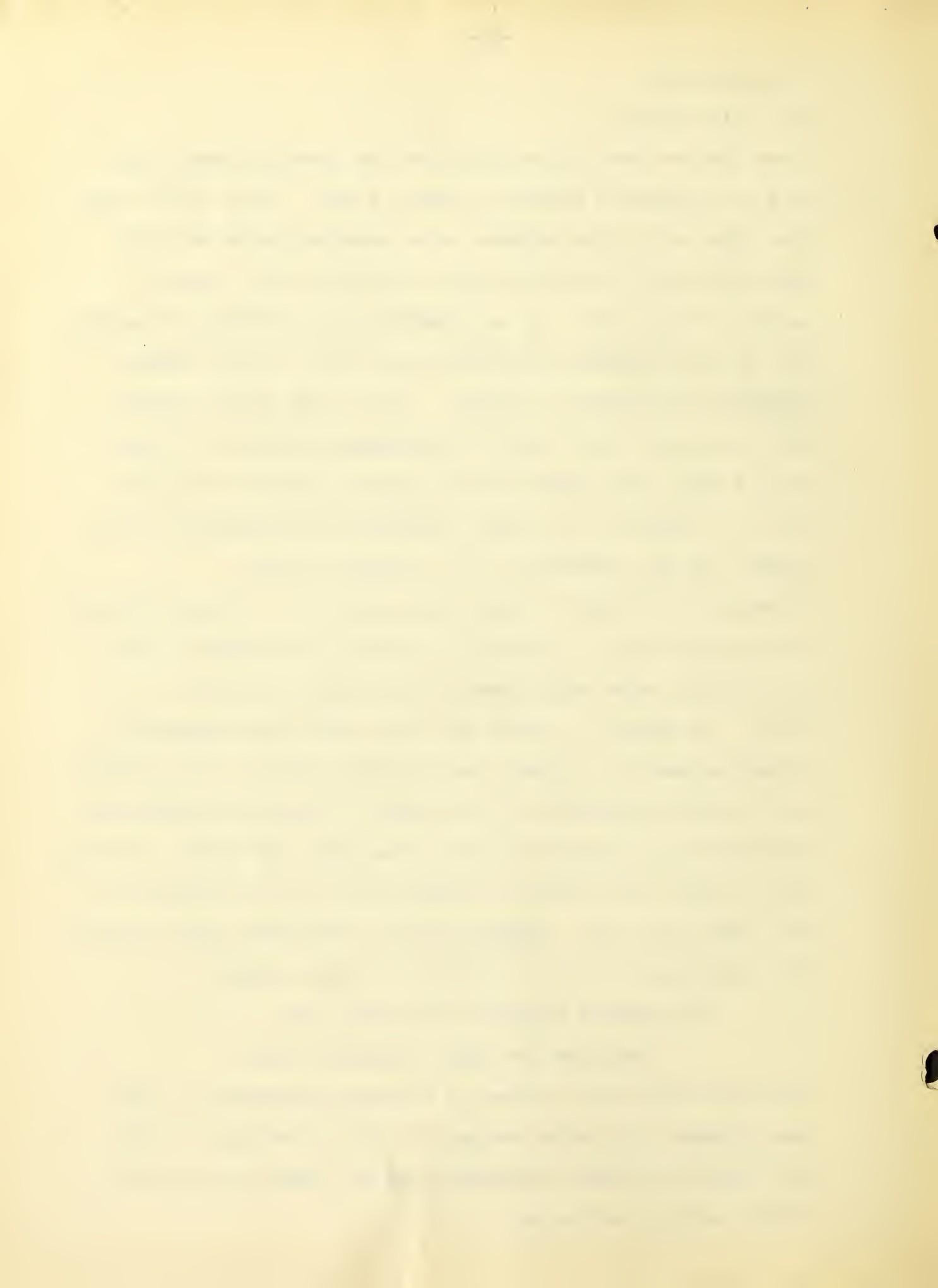
a). Introductory.

Here then we have the setting for the powerful drama that was to be enacted before the gaze of man. There is the ONE God,-the God of the Hebrews in an especial sense and yet the God of all the world,-who is high over all, and the source of all life. He is attended by his throngs of angels, who do his bidding, and opposed by a host of evil powers under the leadership of Satan. And in this spirit world, high above all this host of intermediary beings, so close to God that Paul gives him the especial title of "Son of God", is Christ,-he who was present at the creation of the world, and the favorite in the councils of God.

Finally, the fulness of time came,(Gal.4:4). In some passages God sends his Son,(Rom.8:3, Gal.4:4); in others, Christ voluntarily takes upon himself the mission,(2Cor.8:9, Phil. 2:6). The manner in which Paul uses these two expressions interchangeably, suggests the complete harmony in the divine plan for the redemption of the world. Thus in meekness and humility the preexistent Christ came into the world, took the form of man, and lived his earthly life for the salvation of the world from sin. Charles Wesley's beautiful words express the sentiment that was in the mind of the Apostle,

"He emptied himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race".

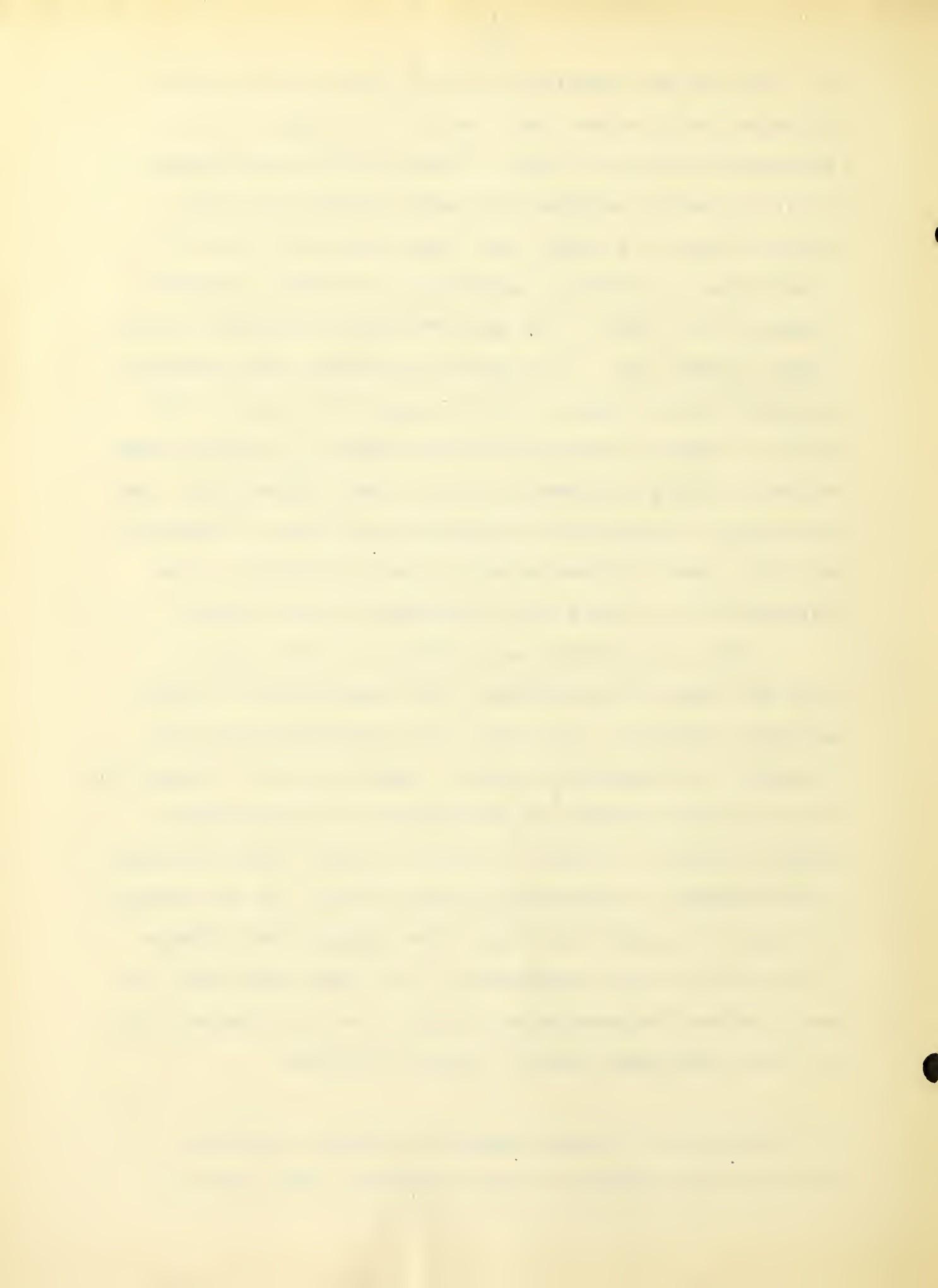
We enter here upon a number of difficult questions. They seem however, to centre around two main questions; -1). How did Christ come into the world? and 2). What was the nature of his earthly existence?



b). How did the preexistent Christ come into the world? We cannot be sure that Paul knew of the doctrine of the supernatural birth of Jesus. There are only three verses in all of Paul's letters which have a bearing upon the subject; "born of a woman, born under the law", (Gal. 4:4); "the fathers, of whom as concerning the flesh, is Christ, (Romans 9:5); "born of the seed of David, according to the flesh, (Romans 1:3). It is hard to approach these passages without doctrinal bias. He who accepts the story of the birth of Jesus as Matthew and Luke relate it, finds in these verses a subtle confirmation of the gospel narratives. He who rejects the account as given by the gospels of Matthew and Luke, sees in these verses a simple statement of the natural birth of Jesus and is confirmed in his opinion.

What we can fairly say, however, is this; that if Paul had heard of the report of the virgin birth of Jesus, and was convinced of its truth, he nevertheless does not consider it an essential matter. Had we only the letters of Paul we would not have the doctrine of the supernatural birth. Though, of course, in view of Paul's usual disregard of the details of the earthly life of Jesus, and his resolve to know no man after the flesh, the argument from silence, in this case is not convincing. It is clear that Paul did not consider the supernatural birth to be the necessary mode for the preexistent Christ to enter the world.

c). The Nature of Christ during His Earthly Existence.
We come to the second of these questions, "What was the



nature of Christ during his life here upon the earth? Did he wal' the earth as man or only in the form of man? Was he truly human, or only apparently so? We can best discuss this under two heads; - 1). The perfect deity of Christ, and 2). The perfect humanity of Christ.

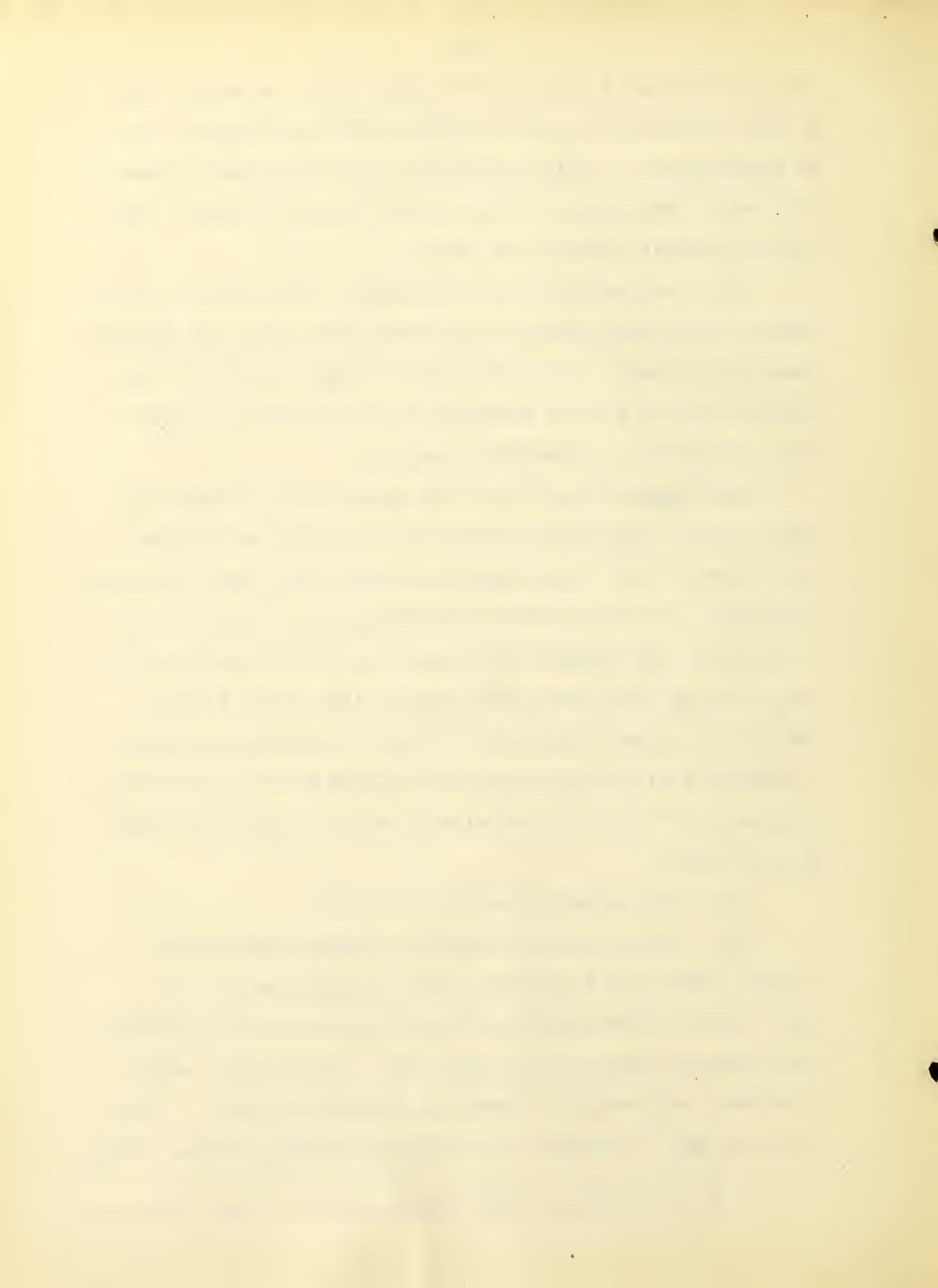
1). The Perfect Deity of Christ. The thought of Paul seems to vacillate between the perfect deity and the perfect humanity of Christ. He would like to ascribe both to him, but the fact is that he does not ascribe either to him ⁱⁿ any consistent and unqualified manner.

We have already seen that Paul never gave to Christ the name of God. There are moments when we feel that he comes very close to it. There are times when, as we read, it seems inevitable. But even when we are expecting to hear it, as in Phil. 2:6, the Apostle falls back from the daring conception, and only says that Christ was in "the form of God". Even in an eloquent outburst of praise concerning the power of Christ, as in 1Cor. 15:23-28, Paul does not stop with the supremacy of Christ, but carries us back to where God shall be all in all.

2). The perfect Humanity of Christ.

a). But did not Paul ascribe perfect humanity to Christ? This is the question which chiefly concerns us here. Gilbert advances four reasons which prove to him that Paul regarded Jesus as truly man, (1). Since these reasons represent practically all that can be said in favor of this it may be well to examine the validity of these points. They

1). Gilbert, -First Interpreters of Jesus, -pages 4-7.



are as follows:-

1). Paul always calls Jesus a man.

Now this is by no means the case. On the contrary, the usual title of Christ is 'the Lord', or else 'Son of God'. And in the few places where he does speak of Jesus as a man, (as in Romans 5:15, or 1Cor.15:21), there is clearly no attempt at metaphysical distinctions. They are cases where he is not at all concerned with the question of the being of Christ, and his use of the common generic term 'man' has little significance.

2). Paul ascribes to Jesus a human origin.

This we have seen to be uncertain, but even if it were true, it would not be conclusive. Judging from Paul's own teachings, the question as to the mode of the entrance of Christ into the world was without significance.

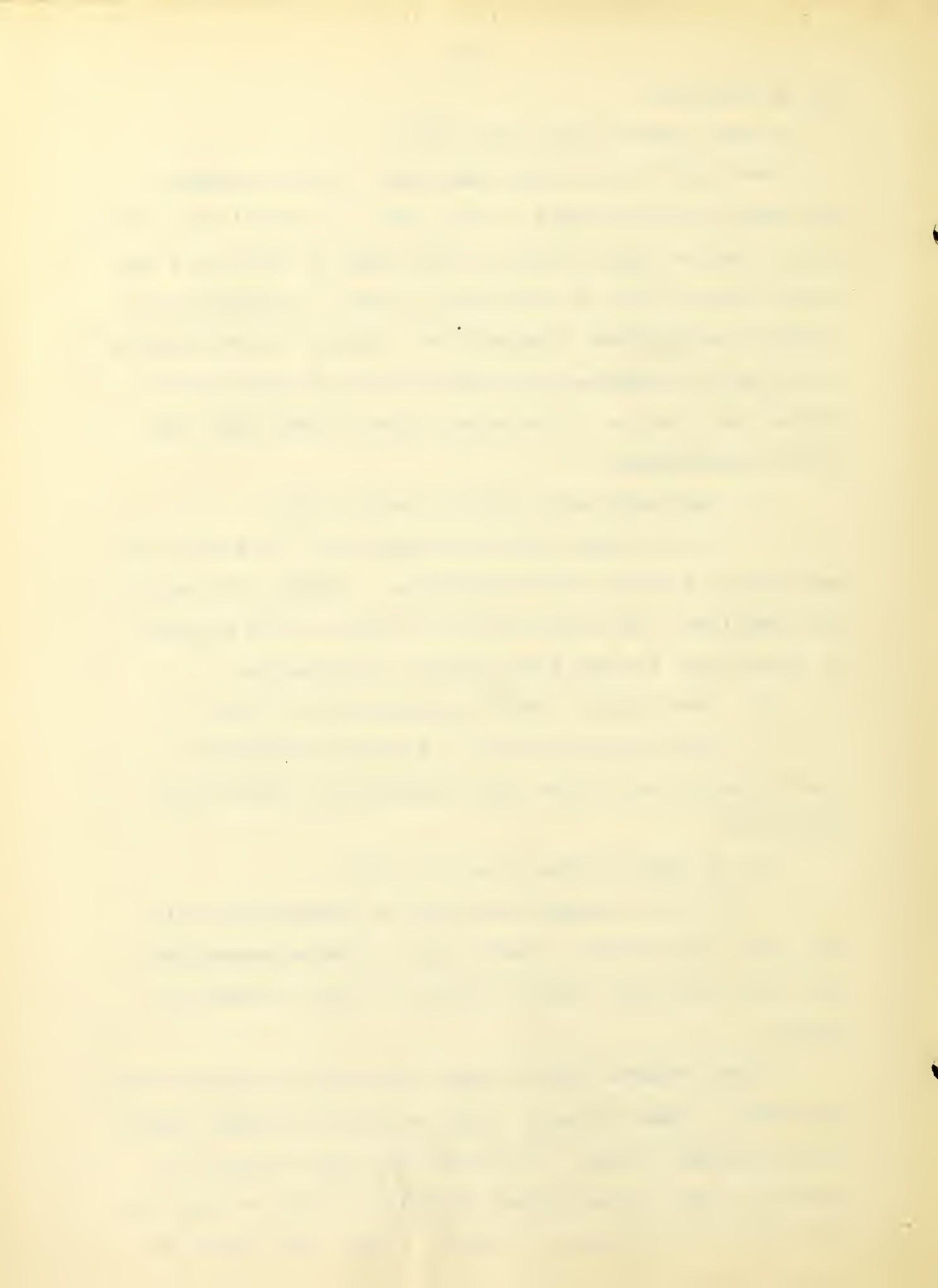
3). Paul places Jesus in parallelism with man.

But he also puts him in a place by himself in many instances,-as in the chain arguments of 1Cor.3:23, or 1Cor.11:5.

4). He distinguishes Jesus from God.

But it is equally true that he distinguishes him from man. This reason is based upon the false assumption that Paul recognized only two modes of being,- human and divine.

These reasons fall of their own weight, because of the fact that in Paul's thought there were many different ranks of intermediary beings. So though they might be used to prove that Paul did not think of Christ as God, yet they do not show that he thought of Christ as man. They might be



all true, and still it might be shown that Paul regarded Christ as an intermediary being, far above the plane of man. Sheldon says that "Paul's language falls short of an explicit declaration of Christ's possession of a complete human nature", (1), although he does not regard Paul's silence as having any significance.

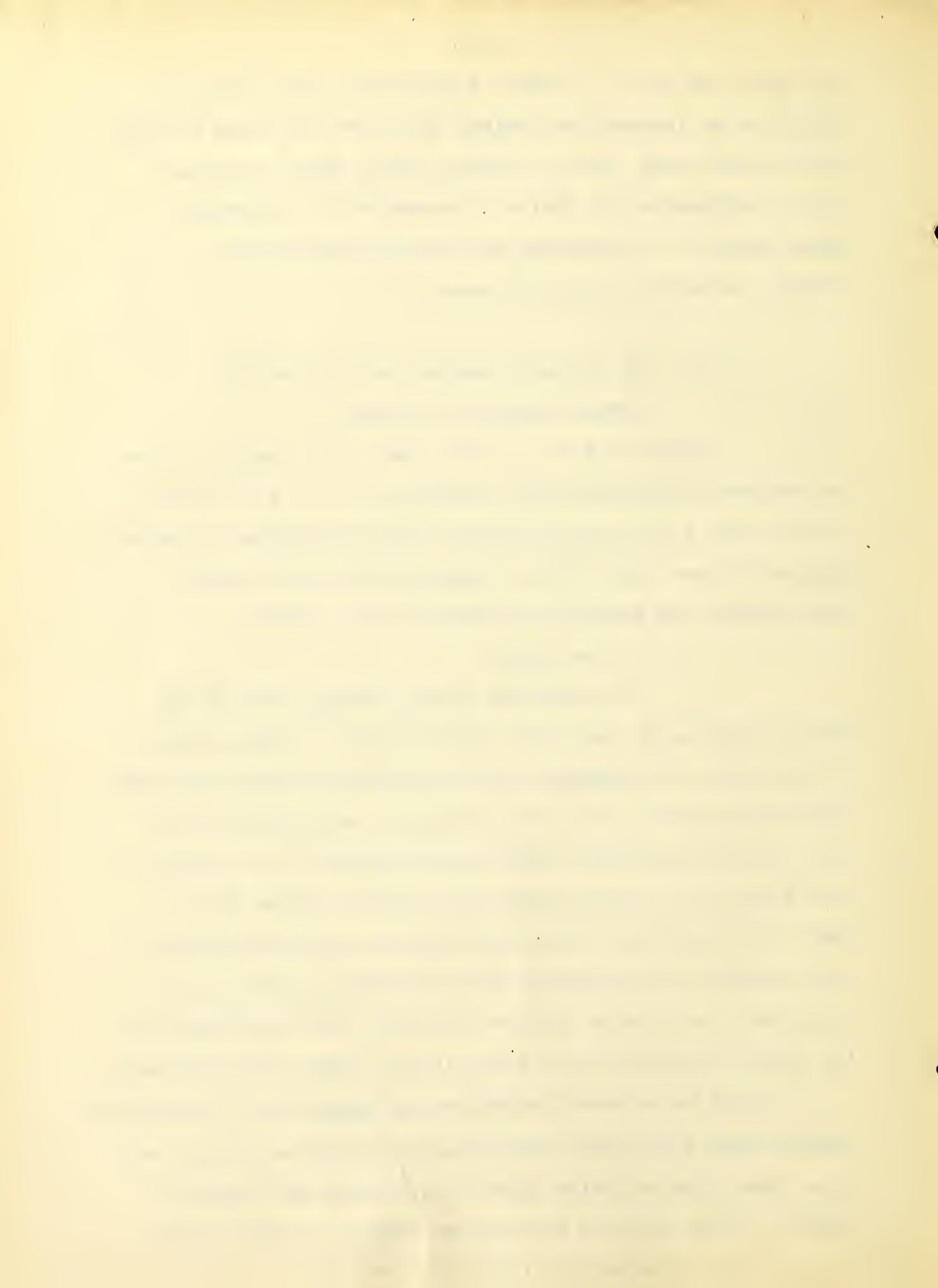
b). The Argument against Paul's Ascribing Perfect Humanity to Christ.

He who sets out to show that Paul regarded Christ as completely identified with humanity, and in every sense of the word, a man, must dispose of two troublesome passages, - Romans 8:3, and Phil.2:7-8. They are difficult because they involve the relation of Christ to the 'Flesh'.

1). The Flesh.

The question of the Pauline idea of the Flesh brings us to one of the storm centres in the history of Paulinism. The dualism of the time of Paul held that the flesh was an absolutely evil principle, having existed as such from the beginning, and therefore simply to be identified with sin. Did Paul share this view? Such a cry as that of Romans 7:24, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"; or the general tone of Romans, Chapter 8; or the prevailing thought of 1Cor.15:45-50; - such statements of the Apostle seem to fit in well with the view just mentioned.

Or did he believe that SIN was an alien force that at the time of Adam's fall had invaded and conquered the Flesh, and since that time had ruled there as a foreign and usurping power? Did he think of Sin as some dreadful demonic power.

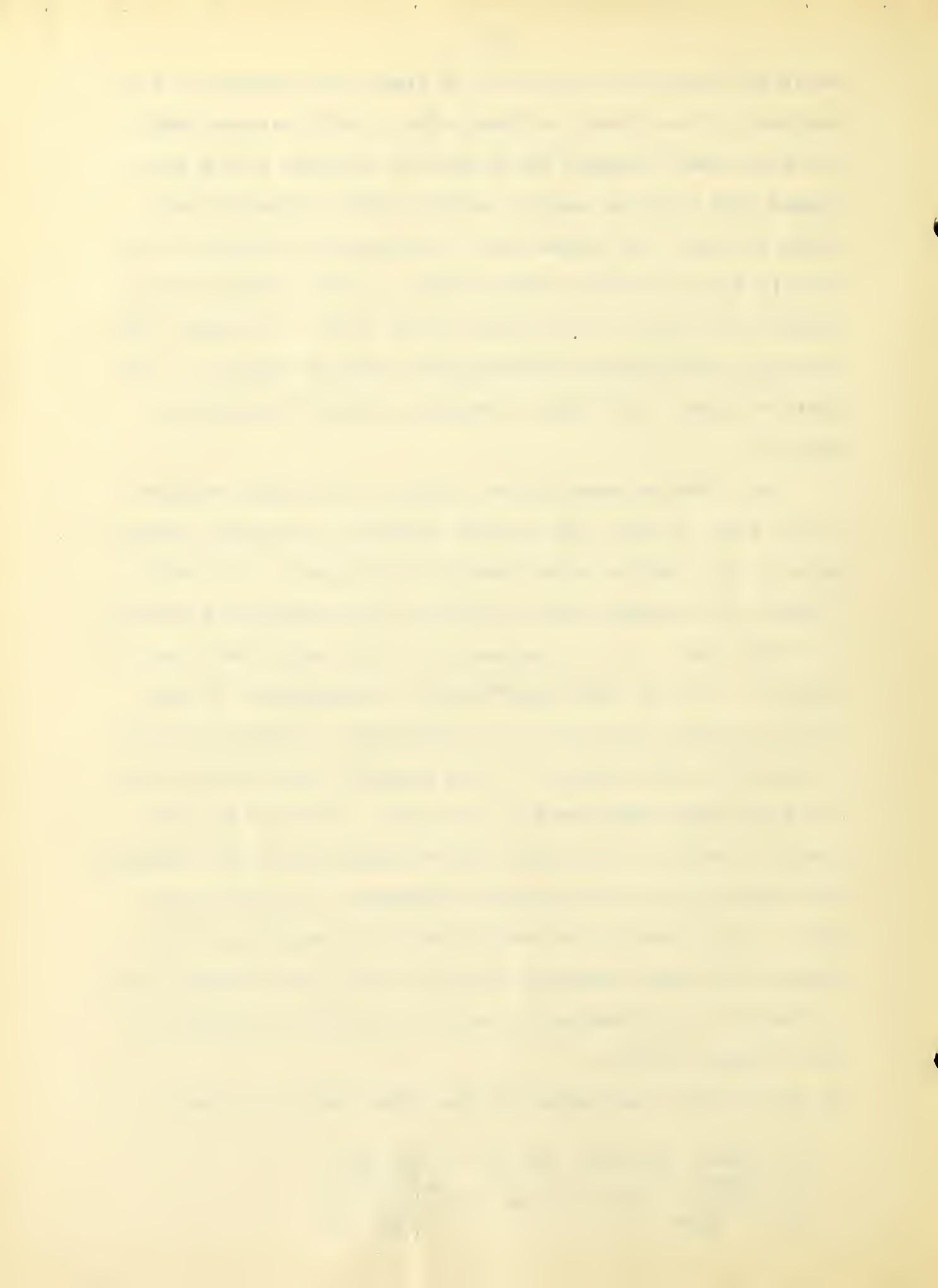


which had forced its way into the flesh, and because of the weakness of the flesh, had been able to hold supreme sway? There are many passages which seem to indicate such a view. Romans 5:12, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." In Romans 6:12, he urges his readers not to let sin reign in their mortal bodies. Feine, among others, accepts this as the true Pauline idea of sin. He says, "The Flesh was not from the beginning the seat of sin", (1). And again he says, "The flesh is corrupt, but not essentially evil."(2).

Here then we have the two views of the flesh, current in the time of Paul, and to each of which we can find statements in his letters which seem to correspond. As a matter of fact, the Apostle makes no clear, and consistent statement of either view. In this connection Weinel says, "Paul has in regard to this no absolutely certain declarations; he puts forth thoughts here which he has inherited, which to him are so clear and self evident on this account, just as to us for the same reason they are not clear."(3). Much of the language of Paul is figurative, and we cannot force the metaphors into any definite and concrete statement. To quote Weinel again, "It is best to be content with the teaching of the power of Sin over humanity; Sin is in the world, (Romans 5:12), it dwells in the flesh and compels the natural instincts of man to serve it."(4).

So whether from the beginning, the flesh was in its very

- 1) Feine- Theologie des N.T.- page 318.
- 2) Same page 323.
- 3) Weinel- Theologie des N.T.- page 276.
- 4) Same page 276.



nature and essence SIN, or whether it had been made sinful by an invasion of sin into the flesh,-the common ground which both of these views occupy is this;-that in the thought of Paul the two, FLESH and Sin, are very closely allied. Man stands powerless before the Law, because man is flesh. The flesh is the seat of sin. In the flesh dwells no good thing, (Romans 7:18). The only type of humanity which Paul recognized was sinful humanity. "All are under sin, both Jew and Gentile", (Romans 3:9). If the flesh was not essentially, and from the beginning, sin, yet because of the universal prevalence of the latter, the two, flesh and sin, were for all practical purposes inseparably connected in the mind of the Apostle. The flesh is enmity against God. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God", (Romans 8:8). So closely allied are the two ideas that Feine, although holding that sin was only an alien force invading the flesh, nevertheless says, "The conceptions, flesh and sin, seem to coincide in Paul's point of view".(1). That they are not identical may indeed be contended, but that they are very close together and for all practical purposes, inseparable, admits of no dispute.

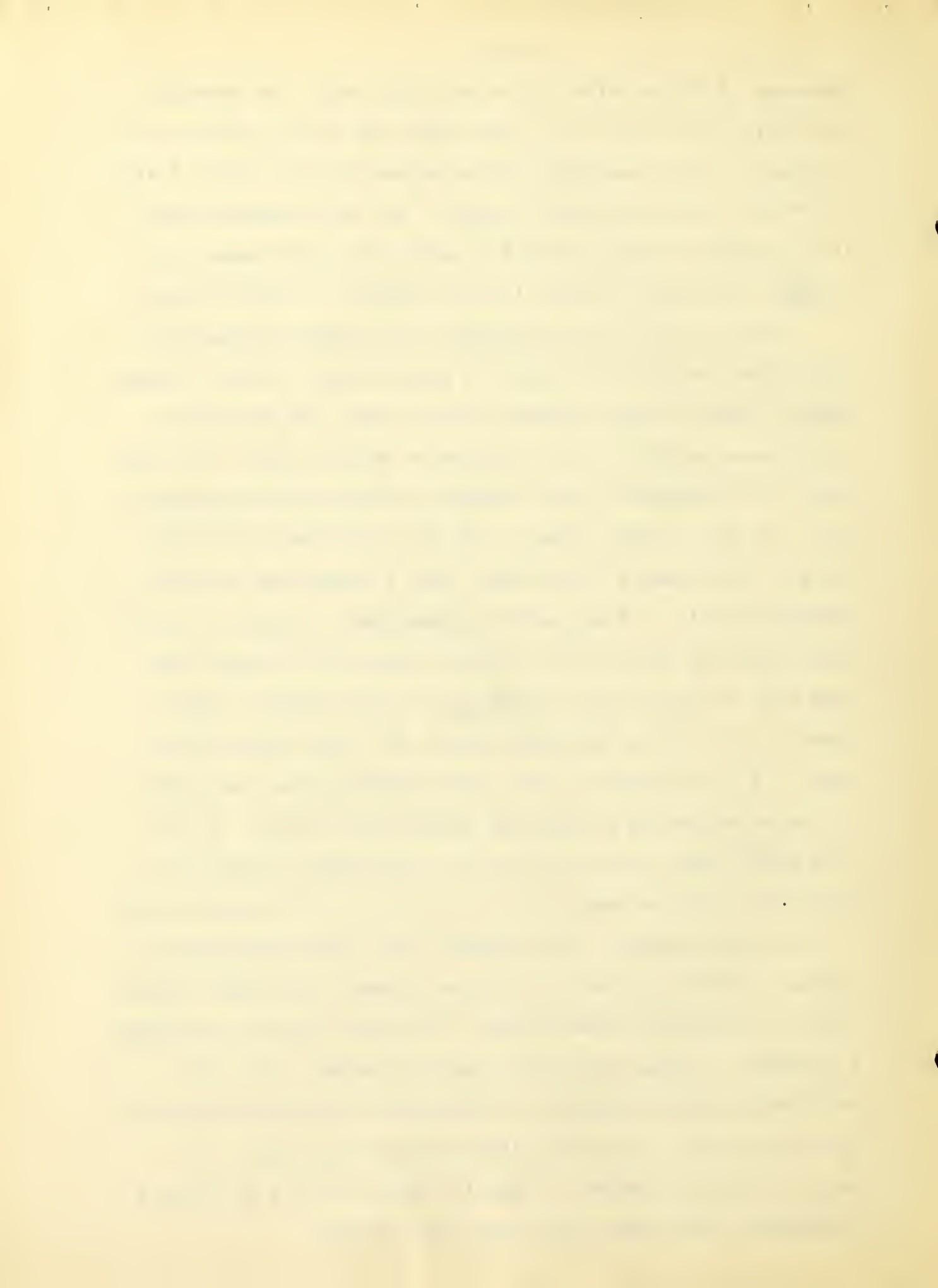
2. It is because of his notion of the flesh as being somehow inseparably connected with sin, that Paul finds a stumbling block in ascribing perfect humanity to Christ. For that would have involved the body of sinful flesh. Romans 8:3 is the classic example of how Paul tried to reconcile the sin-

1). Feine,-Theologie des N.T.-page 316.

lessness of Christ with his being truly man. The preexistent Christ, the Son of God, came into the world, -but how did he come? Was it possible that he entered into a body of sinful flesh, such as all men possess? As Paul reasoned about it he could not bring himself to admit this defilement, so he says, God sent His son 'IN THE LIKENESS OF SINNIFUL FLESH'.

Now in order to be consistent, the whole argument demands that the body of Christ be indeed that of sinful flesh. And the force of the argument is lost when Paul says that Christ came merely in the likeness of sinful flesh. For sin was to be condemned in the flesh by a sinless being entering into a body of sinful flesh. But the sinlessness of Christ and the sinfulness of the flesh, form a chasm that even the dialectic skill of the great logician cannot bridge. So he sacrifices his idea of the perfect humanity of Christ, and says that he came in the likeness of sinful flesh. There seems to be no other adequate reason for such a circumlocution. It is no doubt in this same extremity that he speaks of Christ as having a spiritual body, (1Cor.15:44). It is this again which leads him into the impossible paradox of 2Cor.5:21, "For he made him to be sin for us who knew no sin".

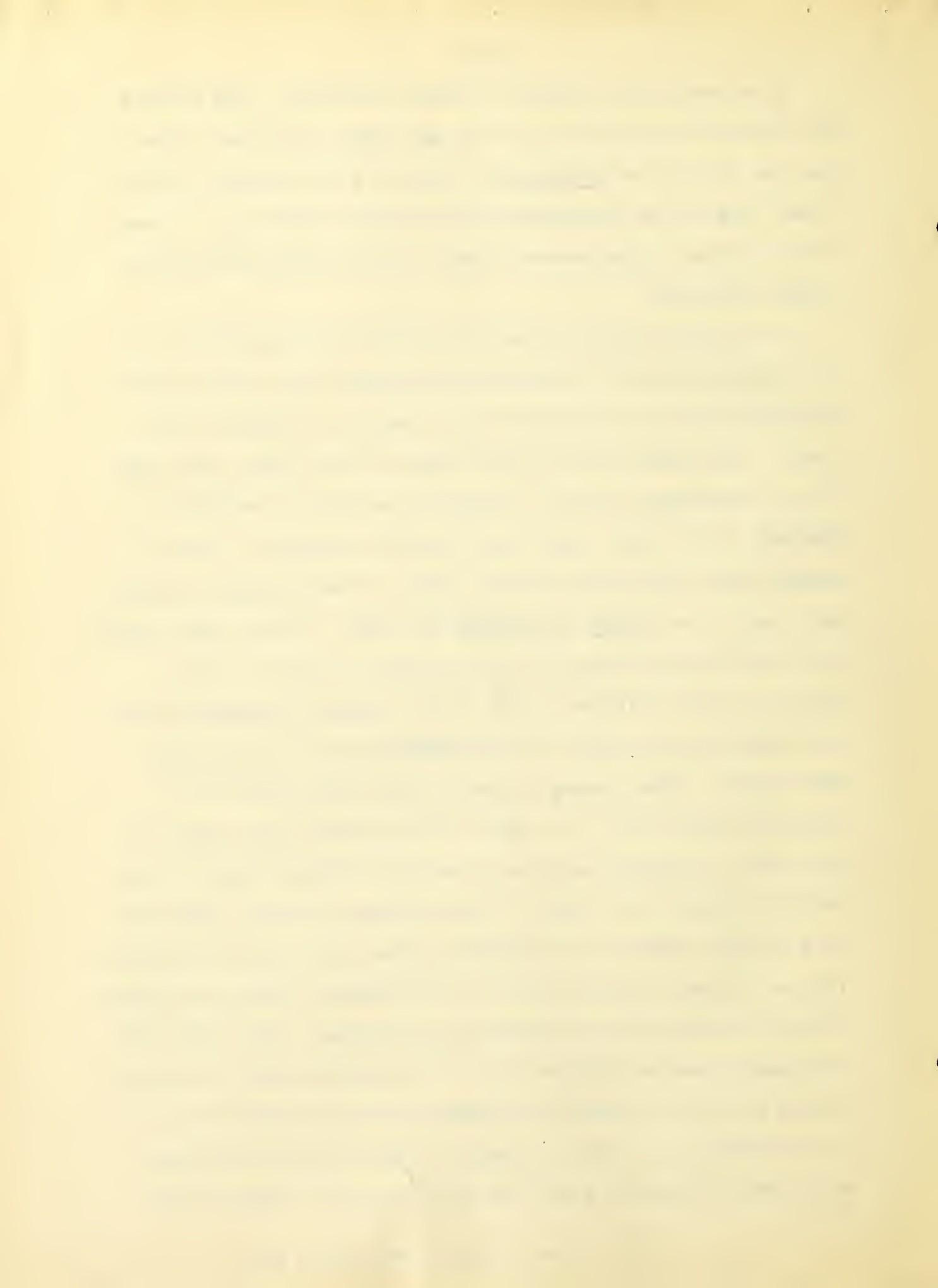
"In the likeness of the flesh". Was Paul attempting to express with this phrase a likeness between Christ and humanity, or a contrast between them? If he was trying to express a likeness, in what did this likeness consist? The most outstanding characteristic of the flesh to Paul was sin, but Christ came into the world without this chief trait. It would be rather strange, to say the least, to try to trace a resemblance when this chief trait was lacking.



Is he not rather trying to show a contrast? The thought that rules this verse is not so much that Christ was like man, as it is that although he came in the likeness of the flesh, yet he was fundamentally different from man. He was to all outward appearances a man, but this similarity was merely external.

3. We find a similar line of thought in Phil.2:7-8. It is perhaps even more forcible than Romans 8:3, because the discussion here is not about the relation of Christ to the flesh. The preexistent Christ came into the world, and was to all appearance a man. But was he not then, involved in the sin of the race? And Paul, as if in answer to this unspoken query, says that he was made 'in the likeness of man', and that he was found in fashion as a man. We see here clearly, the hopeless attempt of the Apostle to unite in one picture the two figures,-that of the Heavenly Messiah of Jewish tradition, and that of the earthly Jesus of the early Christians. Weiss characterizes this as "at bottom, an impossible task."(1). In verse 8 we are told that after he was found in fashion as a man, that he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death. The inference is that death was an event into which he willingly entered, and not from necessity,-an ordeal through which he volunteered to pass, and which in his case was not an inevitable experience. But what sort of humanity was he endowed with if he was thus able to escape at his own volition what we regard as the one sure fact of our existence, the fact of death? These are the questions which force themselves upon us as we read the words of the

1). J.Weiss,-Das Urchristentum,-page 378.



Apostle. It may be that for him the problem did not exist, that he found no difficulty in reconciling the two figures. But for us today the problem does exist, and we find no satisfactory solution in the words of the Apostle.

Perhaps Wrede is correct when he says, "The truth is that Paul did not have our idea of personality, -of human individuality. Therefore the humanity of Christ as Paul thought of it, remains for us an unintelligible scheme." (1). It is no doubt true that Paul had a much looser and less rigid idea of personality than we have today. This of course would give him liberty to express his views of the person of Christ with more freedom than we could use.

4. Our conclusion is this; - When Paul was not concerned especially with the question of the person of Christ, he gives him the common generic term of man. So in Romans 5:15, where the theme is the grace of God, he quite naturally calls Christ a man. So also in 1 Tim. 2:5, he speaks of 'the man, Christ Jesus'. But it is clear that the general tenor of the statements of Paul is to the effect that Christ was much more than man. His titles, 'the Lord', and 'the Son of God'; his preexistence as creator and sustainer of the universe; his supremacy over all the intermediary beings; - all of these would show that Paul put Christ in a rank of being far above the plane of humanity. And when he tried to reason the matter out, as in Romans 8:3, or in Phil. 2:7, he found himself confronted with the inevitable paradox of a sinless being dwelling in a body of sinful flesh. And in his extremity he sur-

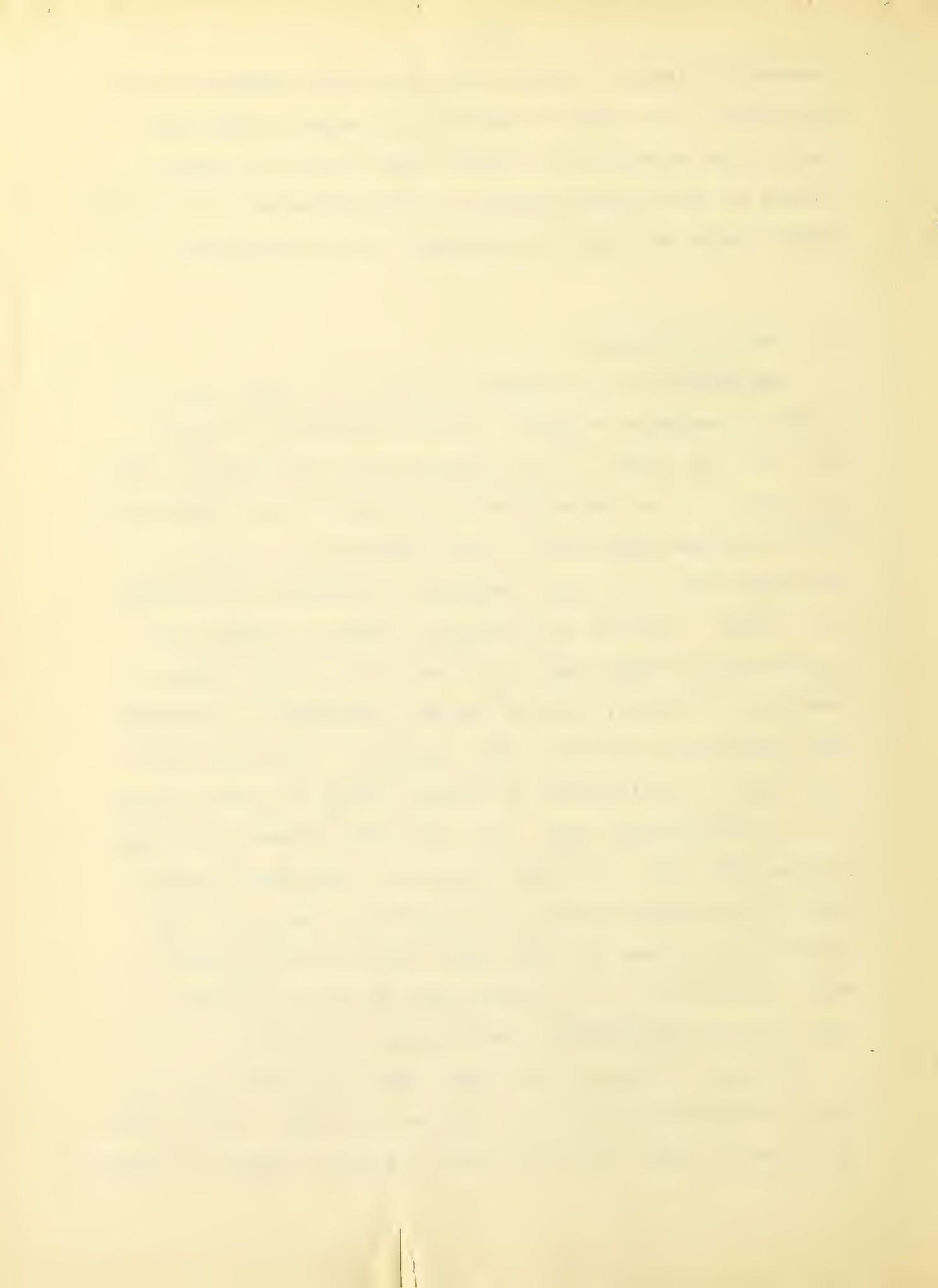
1). Wrede, -Paulus, -page 55.

renders the latter,- Christ was only in the likeness of sinful flesh. It is easy to believe that here is found the germ of the heresy that in later years caused the early Church so many bitter disputes,- the Docetism which held that Christ was a man only in appearance, and not really so.

3. The Risen Christ.

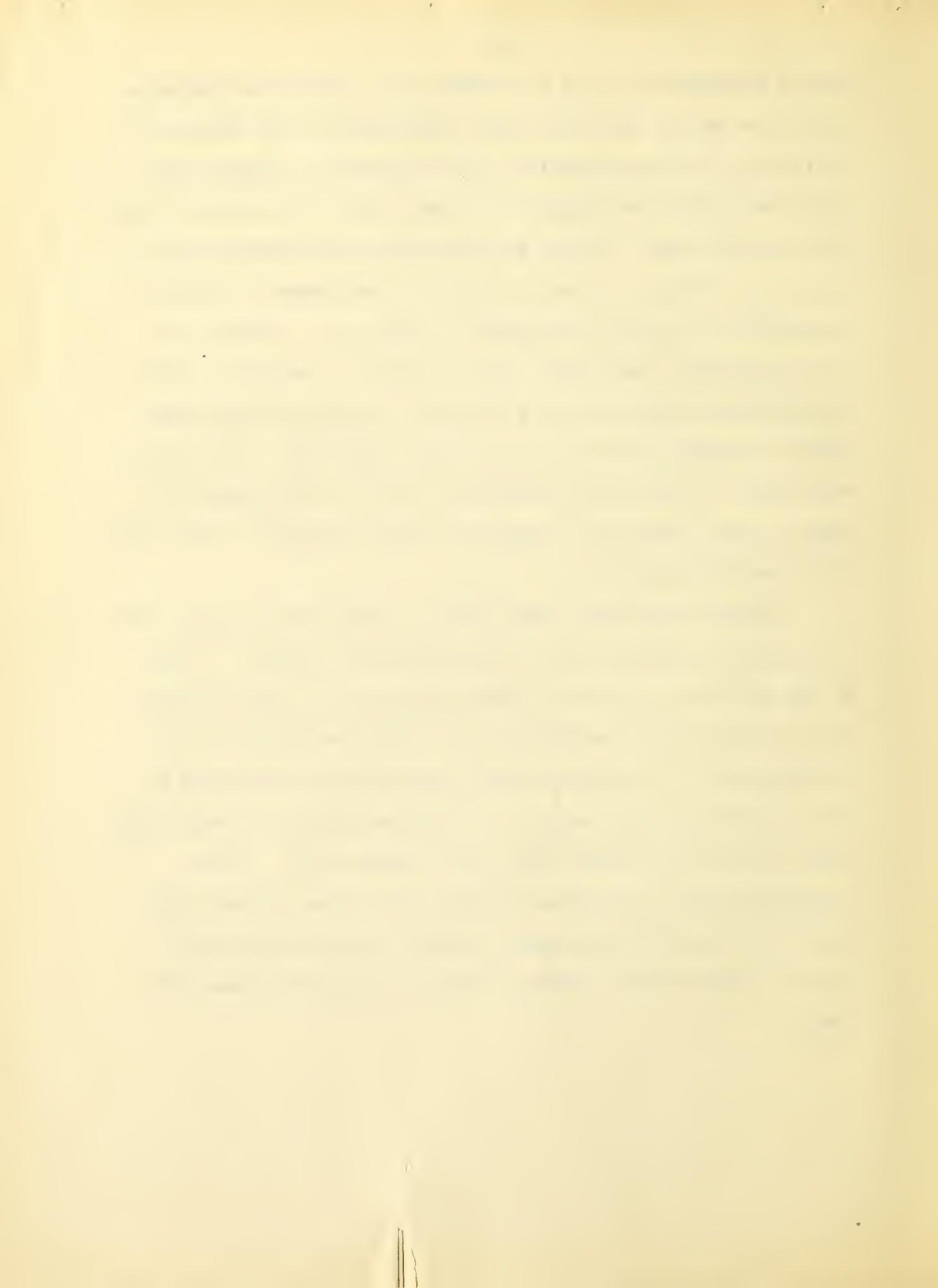
The details of the earthly existence of Christ were of little consequence to Paul. He had determined to know no man after the flesh. "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more,"(2Cor.5:16). This verse has been used by some, (especially J. Leiss), to show that Paul was in all probability personally acquainted with Jesus. But this is doubtless a reaction against the contentions of Trede that Paul knew nothing of the life or teachings of Christ, and that he was proclaiming an entirely new gospel from that which Jesus preached. But whether Paul knew much or little about the earthly Jesus, he cared little for the story of his life. The fact that supremely concerned him was that after his death Christ had risen from the dead. This is the crucial point in the Apostle's theology. "If Christ be not risen from the dead, then is our preaching vain,"(1Cor.15:14). His great desire was that he might know the power of Christ's resurrection, (Phil.3:10).

God seems to have put the final seal of approval upon the work of Christ when he raised him from the dead. Christ gained thereby a place and power which he had not hitherto possessed.



Such a statement we find in Romans 1:4. Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Nothing save the risen Christ could have done away with the scandal of the cross for the Jew. It was as though God was saying again to the world, "This is my beloved Son." The reward of the renunciation of Christ is pictured in Phil.2:9. Because of his humiliation, and death upon the cross, "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." So Christ went back to his former existence, but to a far greater degree of power and honor, because of the successful completion of his earthly ministry.

In this glorified risen state, Christ was to reign with God until he destroyed all his enemies, (1Cor.15:25). Then at the last day, he would descend from heaven "with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God," (1Thess.4:16). The faithful who remained upon the earth at that time were to be "caught up into the clouds, to meet with the Lord, and be forever with him," (1Thess.4:17). Then Christ who has conquered all things, will also subject himself to God, so that God shall be all in all, (1Cor.15:28). Farther than this the ecstatic vision of the seer does not reach.



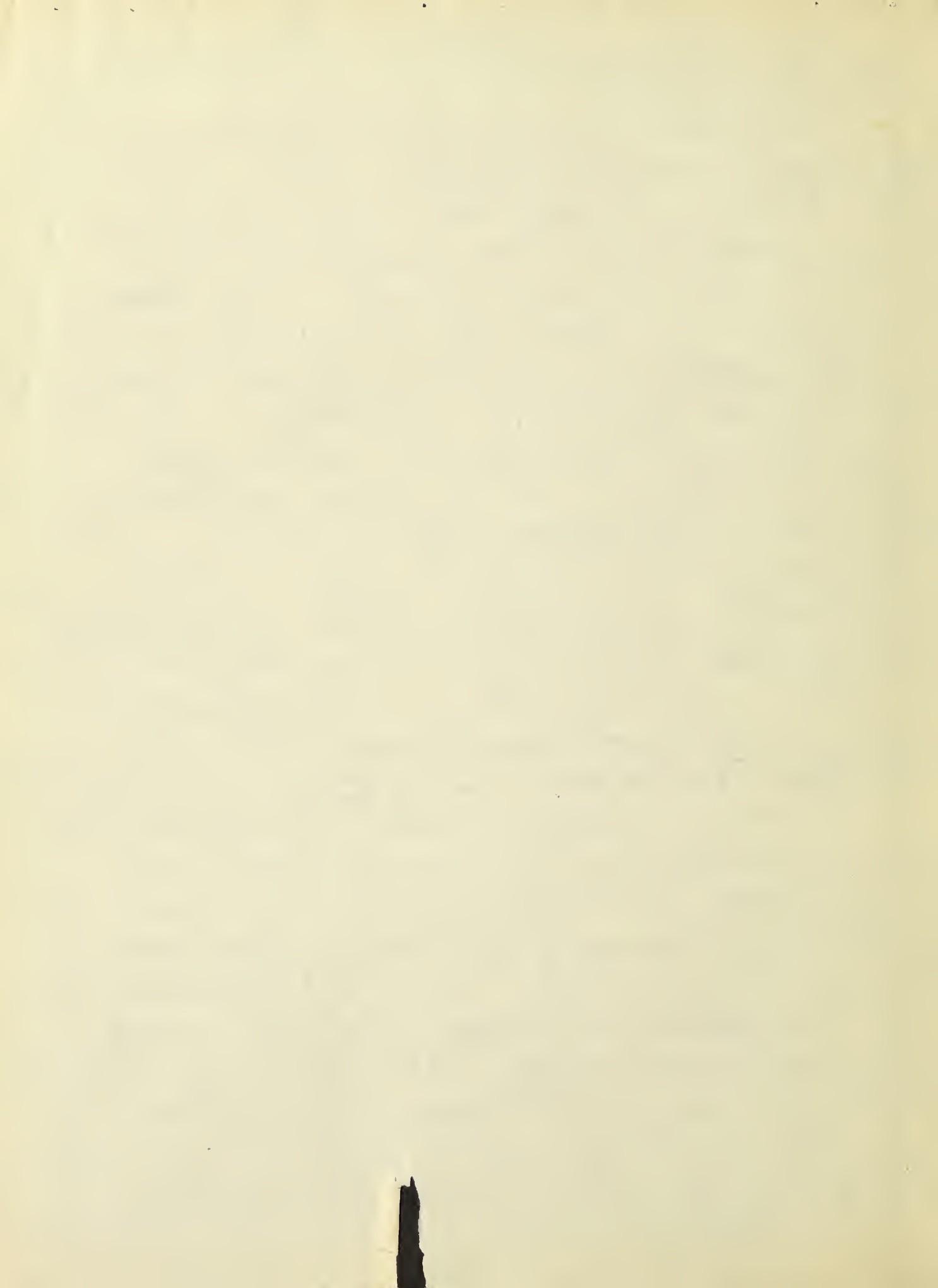
IV. SUMMARY AND RESULTS.

The outstanding facts of the Christology of Paul are clear. Christ was a divine being, existing in some form with God from the beginning, and the active agent in the creation of the world. God sent him into the world to redeem men from sin, the Jew first, but also the Gentile. He came into the world in the likeness of man, and after having wrought out the redemption of the race by his death and triumphant resurrection, he returned to God with added power and honor. With God he is to work in the hearts of men, and to intercede for them until all shall be redeemed. Then he shall come in triumph to deliver over the kingdom and the results of his labors to God.

This in general is the outline of the work and personality of Christ as Paul saw it. They are the generally accepted facts of Paul's Christology. It is not with these facts, but rather with their implications, that difference of opinion arises. It is to no purpose to attempt to get beyond these general statements in some cases. Much of the unclear thought in this connection has been due to an attempt to make the loose statements of the Apostle correspond with the demands of a later theology. But there are some inferences which may be safely drawn, and with due regard to exegetical and historical considerations. We endeavor to sum these up in a final, brief statement.

We have seen that Paul never identified Christ with God.

We have also seen that he never completely



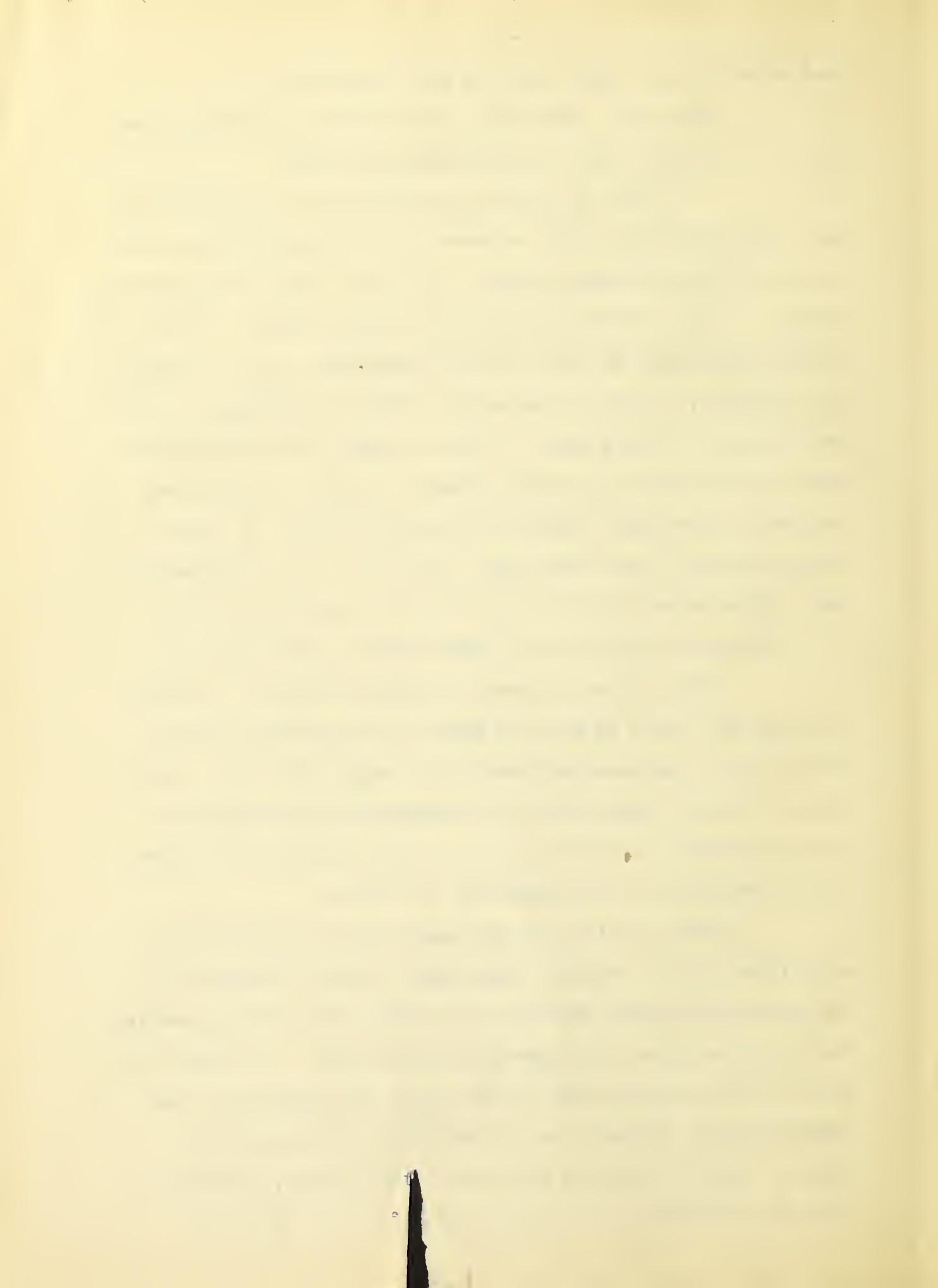
and consistently identified Him with humanity.

Therefore, the rank of the Christ of Pauline theology is somewhere below God and yet above man.

To find the place which Paul gave to Christ is made the easier from what we have seen in regard to his conception of intermediary beings. For Paul lived in a spirit world,- a world filled with good and evil spirits. In his thought there was no hard and fast antithesis between deity and humanity. There was no simple division of life into the two factors, God and man. On the contrary, Paul could find room in his view for a long series of beings, of different degrees of divinity. Here in this spirit world of intermediary beings,- far above man, and yet "in the likeness of man", some where below God, and yet "in the form of God", - here somewhere we can find a place for the Christ of Paul.

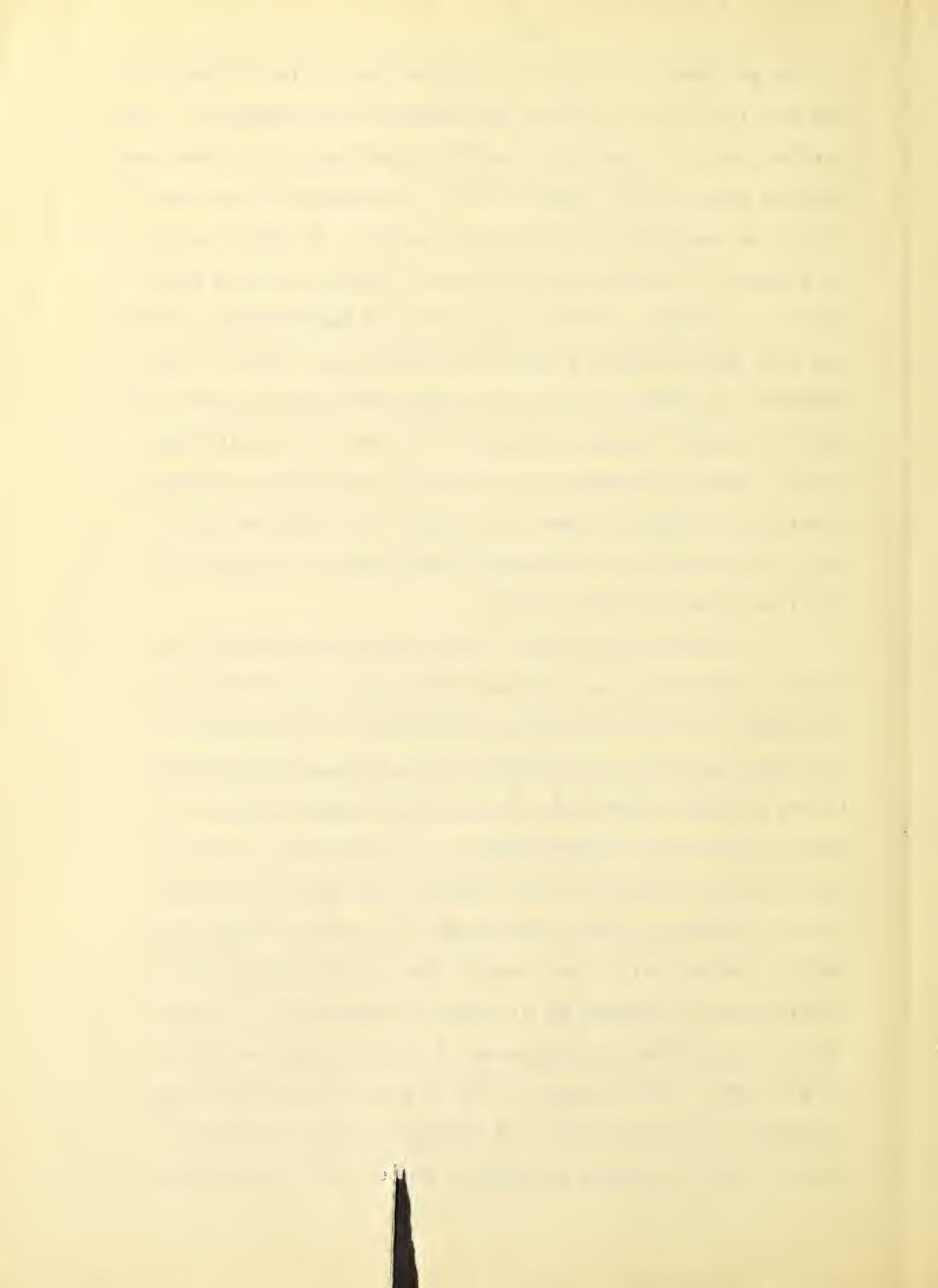
Paul placed Christ in a unique position. He was the head and chief of all the host of intermediary beings. (Col.1:16). His name is above every name, (Phil.2:9). Paul was not greatly concerned with metaphysical distinctions, and we need not expect to find the exact position of Christ and His relation to God expounded in detail.

Paul's whole life had been revolutionized by his experience on the Damascus road with the risen Christ. It was natural that the One who could work such a transformation was to be accorded the highest possible place. So Paul took the old Greek-Hebrew idea of the Logos,-the world soul and creator of all things,- and, identifying Jesus with this Logos, thought of him as the preexistent Christ, existing from all eternity in the counsels of God. He used such



titles as 'The Lord', and 'The Son of God', - the highest he had at his command, next to the name of God Himself, - to describe Jesus. He took the Jewish eschatological scheme, and, placing Jesus in the center of it, represented Him as the Ruler who should come to judge the world. He took the entire host of intermediary beings, and placed them in subjection to Jesus. He took the ideas and conceptions of his own age, and pictured a being far above man, close to God Himself. He used the tools and materials which he found at hand to build a spacious temple to Him whom he calls "The Lord". Paul's Christology, in a word, is a living and enthusiastic attempt to take the ideas of his day and with them, to portray the spiritual significance of Christ as he himself had experienced it.

If therefore, some of his expressions seem to us hard to understand, and have a sound which is foreign to our ears; if we today would not attempt to describe the spiritual supremacy of Jesus as the world has experienced it for nineteen centuries, and as we are experiencing it today in ever increasing measure, in such terms and with such modes of thought as Paul used; if we find statements in his Christology which seem hard to reconcile with present day metaphysics; we need to keep in mind that Paul's mission was to declare to his own age, and not to posterity, the spiritual significance of Him who had transformed his life. This he had to do, of course, with the ideas prevalent in his own day. We today would not attempt to use the Greek language to explain the position and nature



of Christ. In like manner, we need not use the other vehicles of expression which the Apostle found at hand and suitable for his use. We might paraphrase the words of Faust, and say, "Each in his own language. Why not Paul in his?"

That Paul considered Jesus so significant as to identify Him with the Logos; that he considered Him so powerful that he could ascribe to the hosts of intermediary beings only a mean place beside his Lord; that the radiant beauty of the life of Christ was such as to bar Him from complete participation in man's sinful nature; that Jesus was deemed worthy to be the one who was to come in power to judge the world; these are for us the significant facts about Paul's thought of Christ.

And if we keep in mind this fundamental thought, the clumsy scaffolding falls away; and beneath the strange Christological expressions, we catch the beauty and splendor of the structure within,- the dominating, compelling personality of JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD.

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